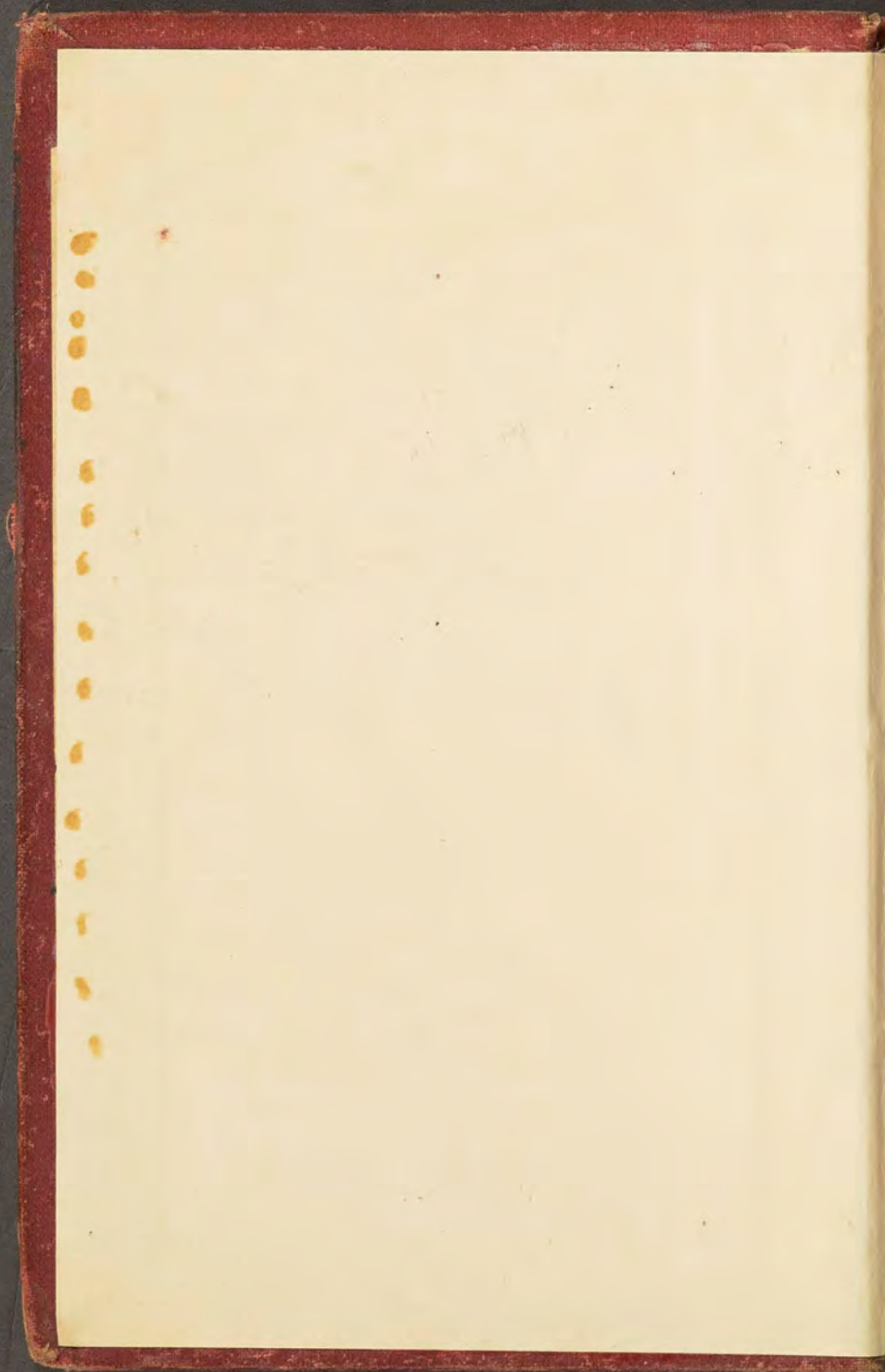


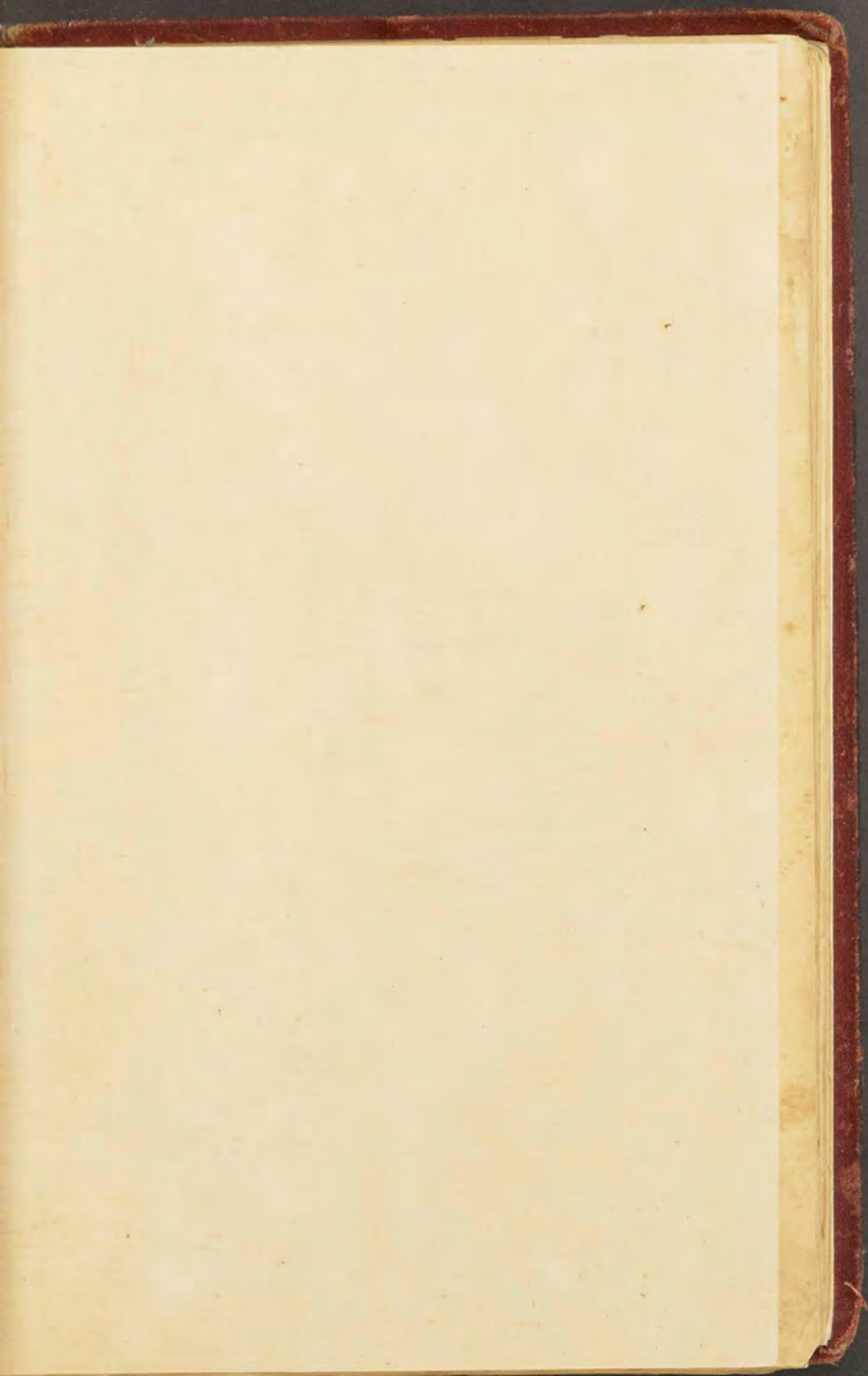
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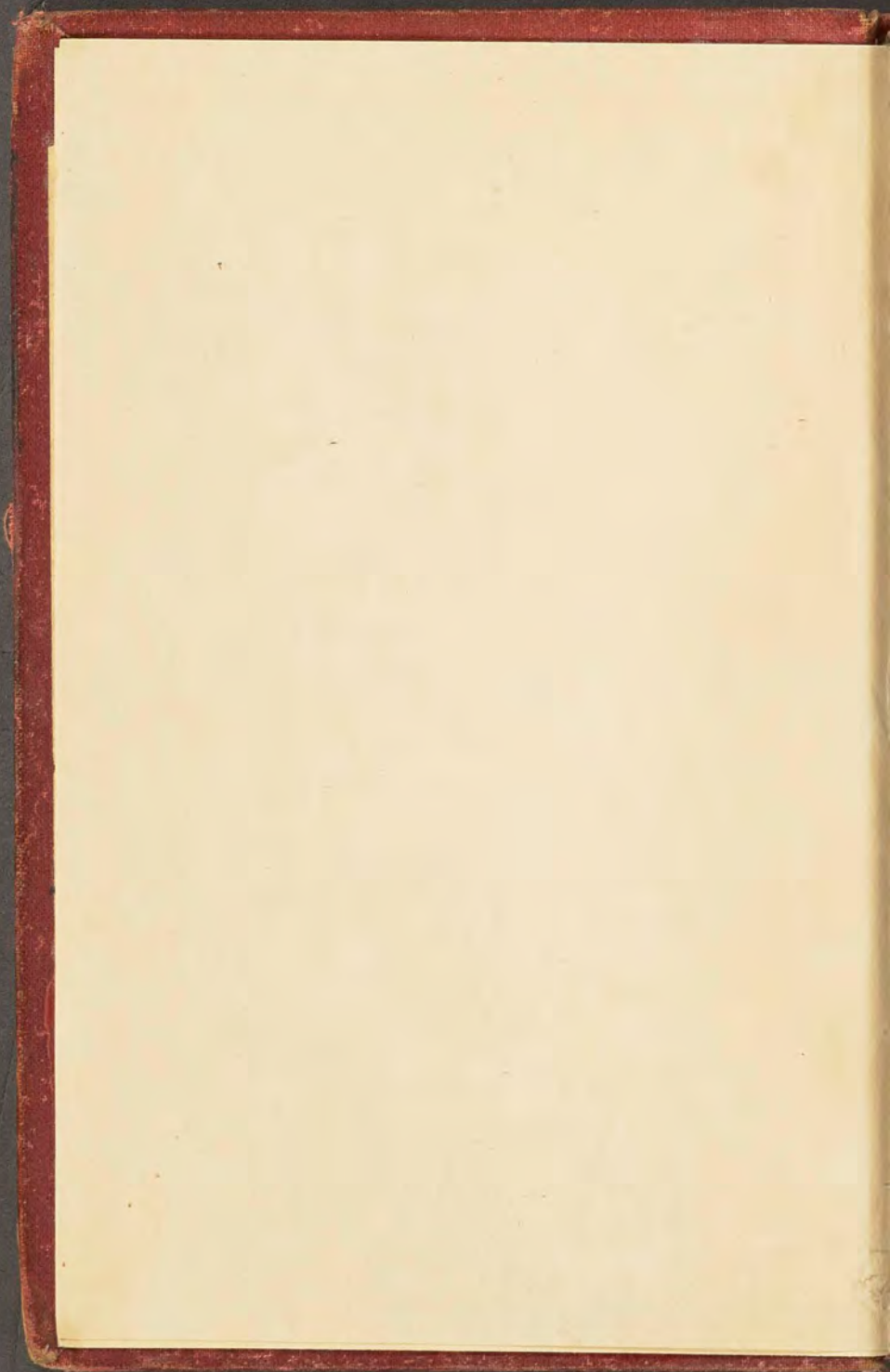
A STORY OF
CAMP LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY
J. R. COUPER.



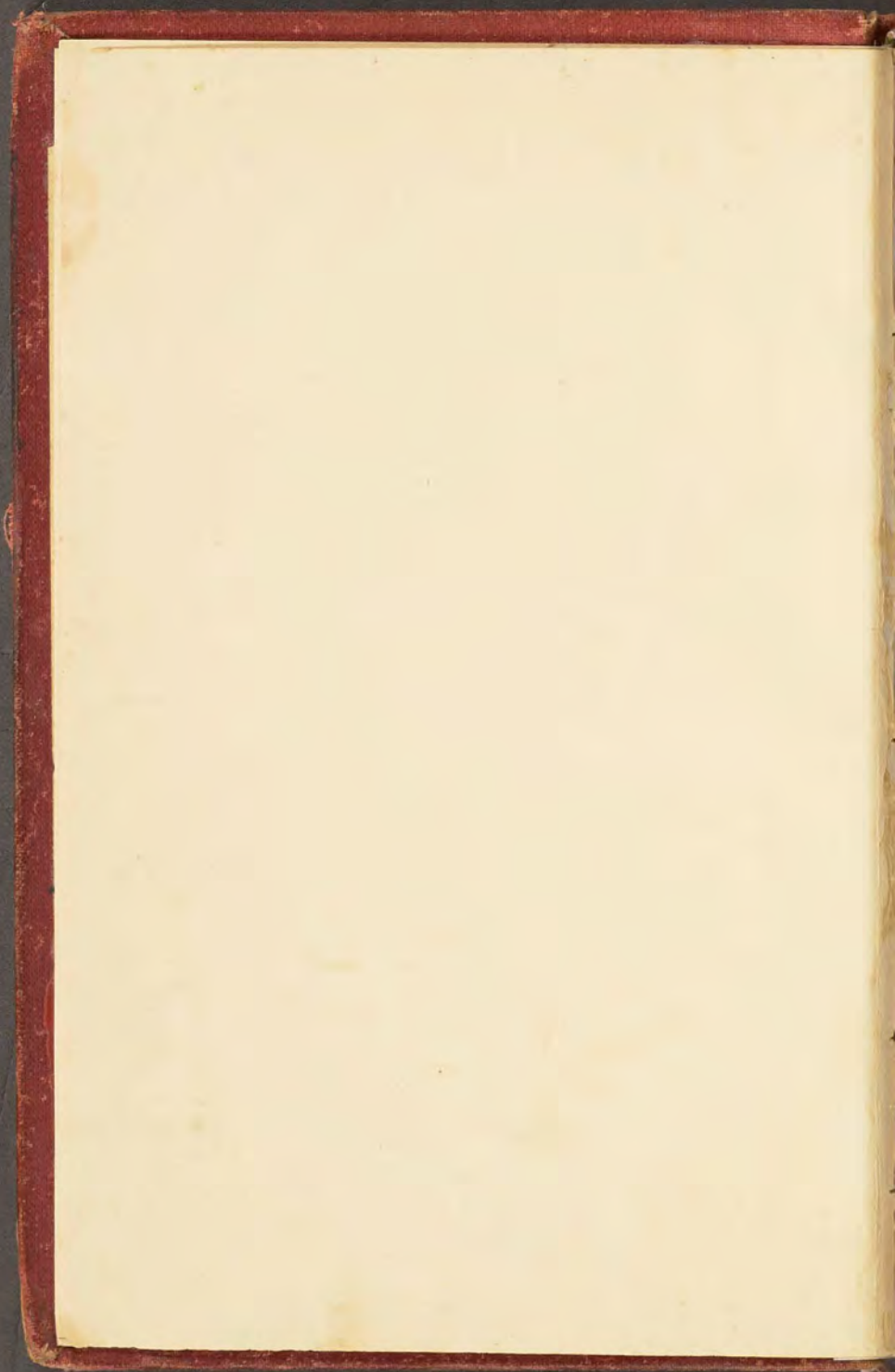
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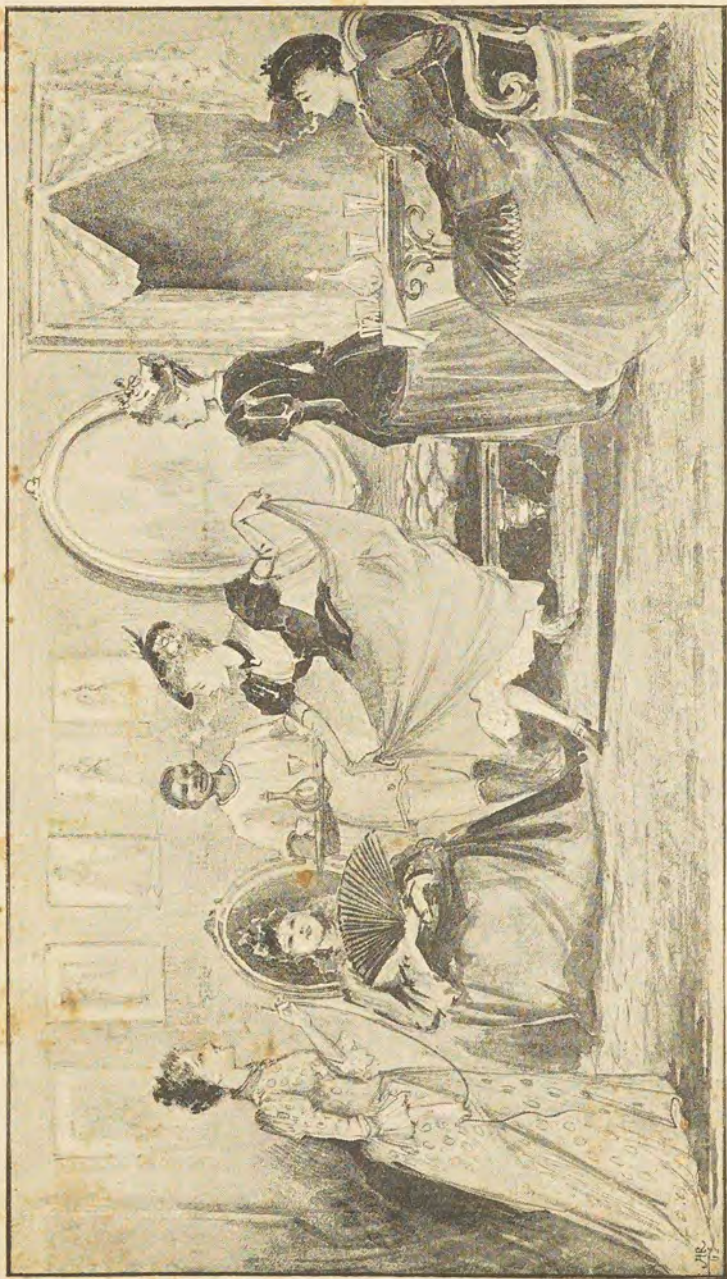


Roan H. Fullerton

6/86







And so well and skilfully did she toss her pretty feet about that May Leslie remarked, "Tis not the first time you have danced, my lady! You are no amateur at the business!"—Page 305.

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MIXED HUMANITY.

A Story

OF

CAMP LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY

J. R. COUPER.

Illustrated by Erving Montagu.



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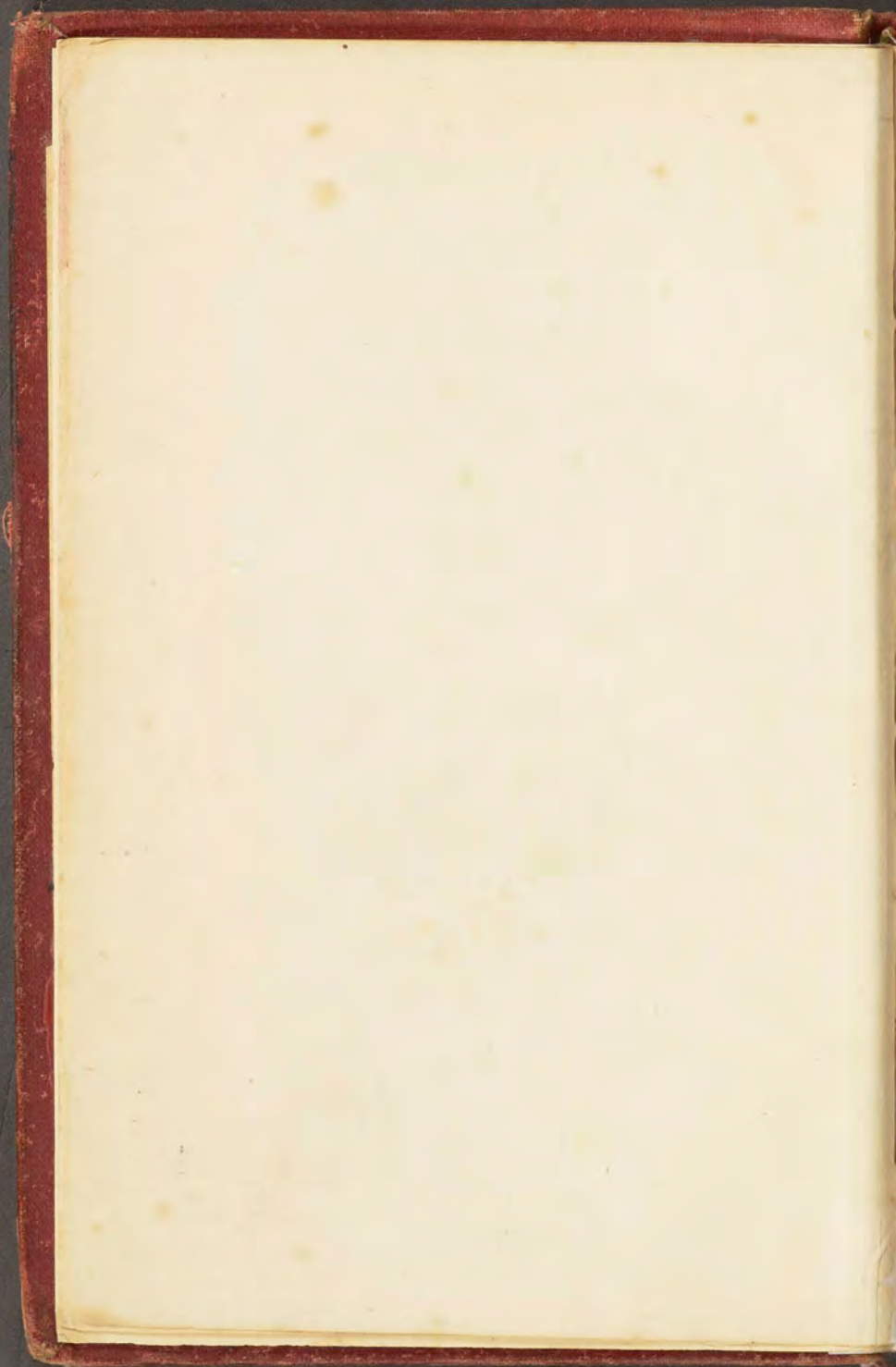
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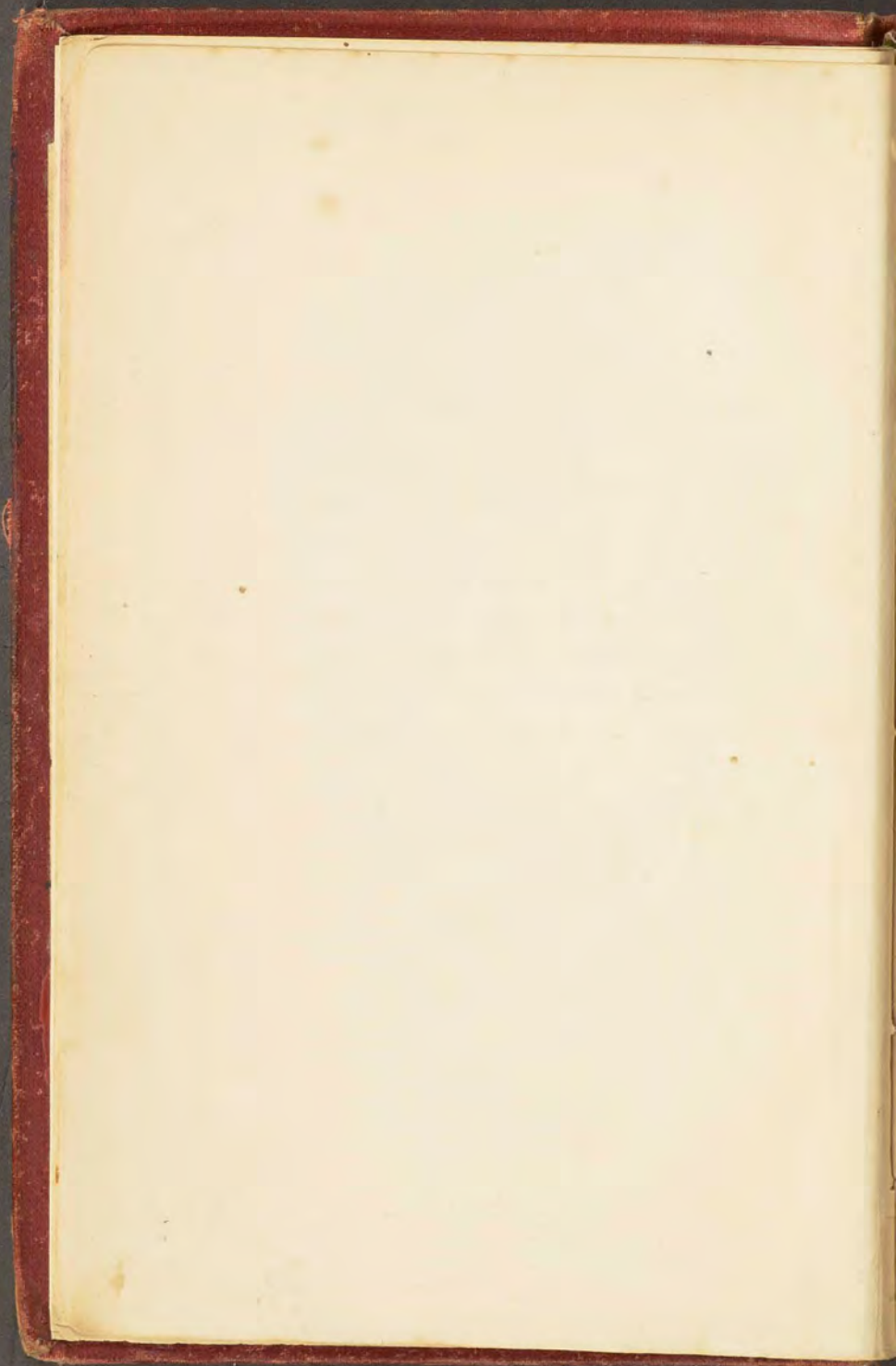
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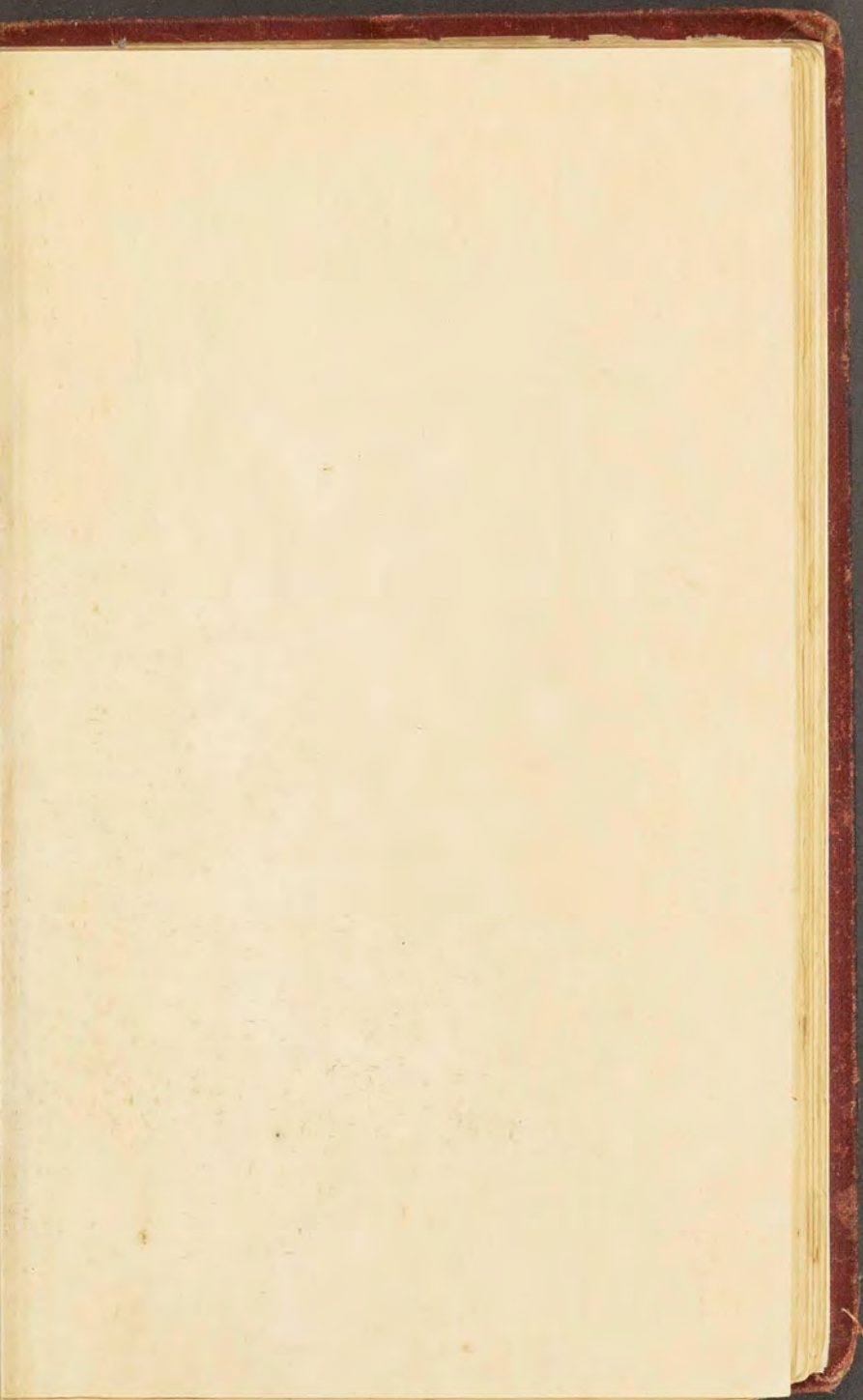


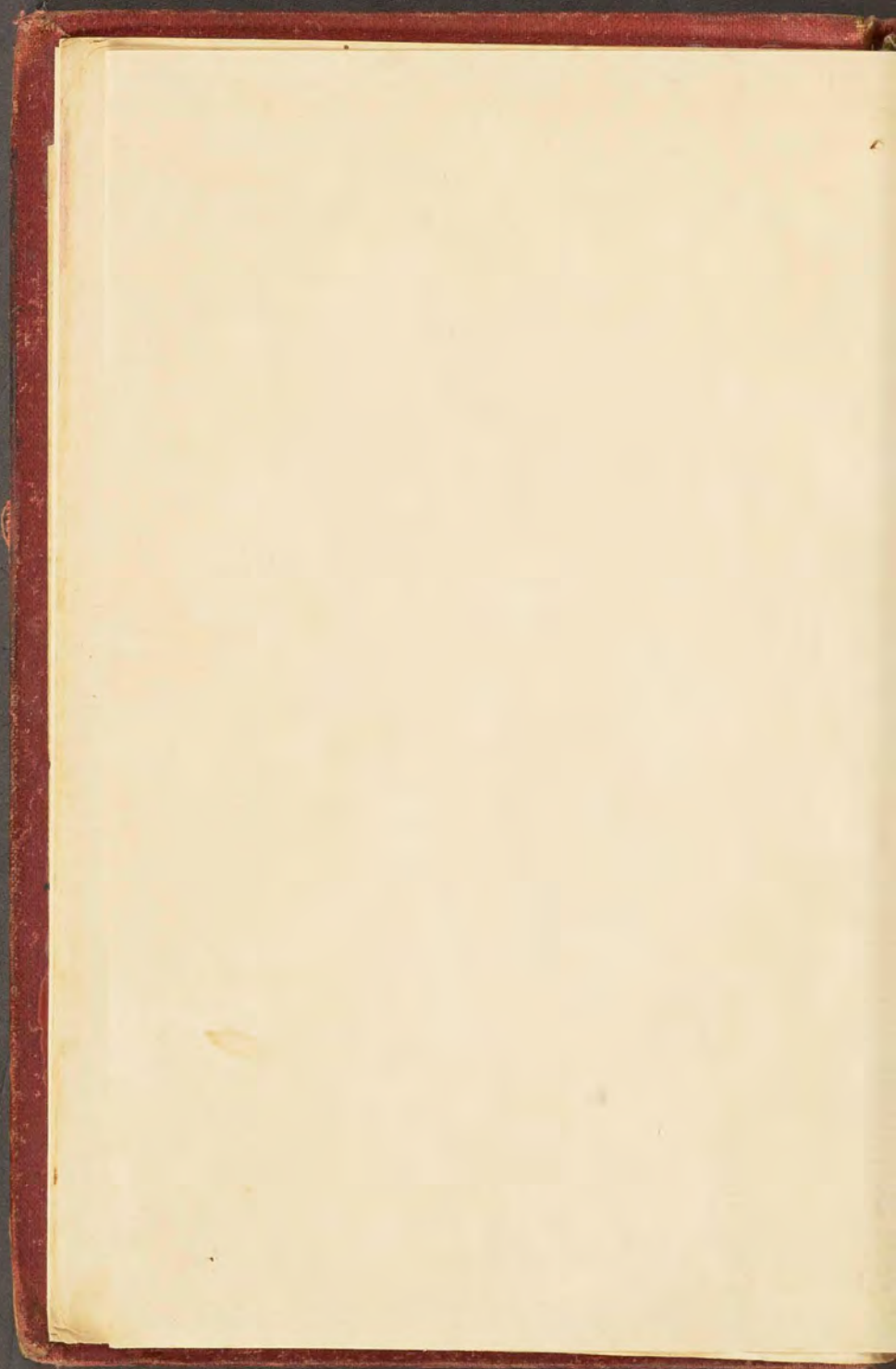
A PREFACE

is always dull, and, personally, I seldom read one. As this is meant to be read, I will make it short. It has been suggested by certain friendly advisers that in the character of Jack Senior I have attempted to portray myself; and obviously one phase of his career has its origin in my own. I would only say that he is not intended for a likeness. That my book has numerous faults nobody can be more keenly aware than I. I have, however, avoided the egregious blunder of posing as my own hero. Some of his adventures have been born in my own experiences; some of his exploits are coloured from events that I have known. But there the resemblance ceases. And with these few words of explanation I leave Jack Senior to the mercy of a Public that has shown such consistent kindness to myself.

J. R. COUPER.







MIXED HUMANITY.



CHAPTER I.

IN the back bar, or canteen, as it was generally called, of the St. George's Hotel, Cape Town, were five young Englishmen. Three sat at a marble-topped table on which were glasses partially filled with whisky-and-soda; the two others leant over the bar, talking to a stout Dutch-looking barmaid, dressed in a red ill-fitting gown, whose frizzy crop of curls hung over her comely fat face almost to the eyes.

It would have been hard for a new arrival from England to have determined the occupation of these young men, or to what class they belonged. The speech, dress, and general style of at least four of them bespoke a curious mixture of the dandy, the colonist, and the military man. A Cape Town resident, however, would have had no difficulty in placing them. It was just after the close of the Basuto War, and these young fellows belonged to a well-known set designated "War Loafers," a name given to the many young English adventurers and ne'er-do-weels, ex-army officers, ex-Cape Mounted Riflemen and others, whose only profession was following the fortunes of the battlefield, and who were almost wholly dependent on the numerous and oft-recurring petty wars with the various belligerent Kaffir tribes, entered into by both Imperial and Colonial Governments. It was puzzling to know what became of them all during the intervals of peace, as, being most improvident, they managed to save little or nothing whilst on the field. But, whenever war was declared, whether against Pondos, Zulus, Basutos, or any other tribe, there was no lack of men to officer the different irregular corps raised for the occasion. Though often

wanting in knowledge of the orthodox military manœuvres, they as a rule had some experience of guerilla warfare, and were far from being deficient in self-assurance.

Two of the three at the table, Captain Le Brun, late Commandant of the "Cape Pigeons," and Captain Searight, late "Willoughby's Horse," were discussing some incidents of the recent campaign, and censuring the disgraceful cessation of hostilities, which, for the time, had deprived them of the means of gaining an honourable livelihood, and occasioned a loss of prestige to the vacillating Cape Government.

Le Brun was a big stout man about thirty years of age. He had a weak, good-natured face. One of his eyes had a terrible squint, while an eye-glass was chronically applied to the other. His hat was remarkably small, his head as remarkably large. He wore knickerbockers, which allowed him to show off a pair of exceedingly stout but ill-shaped calves. Captain Le Brun had served in the Imperial Army—a fact of which he was justly proud—for about seven months. Debt had cut short his career in that service. Without private means, and not having sufficient moral courage to resist joining in the extravagances of his richer brother-officers, he had soon come to grief.

Captain Searight was a tall young fellow, twenty-five years of age, of fair complexion, and the proud possessor of a fine blonde moustache which absorbed much of his attention. Though handsome, the expression of his face denoted unreliability. He was the son of an Irish Bishop, and spoke with a peculiar mixture of the brogue and the English dandy's Haw-haw, a disagreeable combination. His military experience had been, before he obtained his late commission, a five years' service as trooper in the Cape Mounted Rifles. This Hibernian was egotistic, invariably bringing the conversation round to himself. He kept continually asking the other if he remembered this engagement and that engagement during the Basuto War, never failing to make out that on each of these occasions he had done some heroic action; how, for instance, at the taking of some kopje, when the fire was at its hottest, and the men under his charge had begun to falter, he had rushed to their front and by shouting words of encouragement prevented disaster. At the next table sat

a group of Colonial lads, for whose sole benefit Searight appeared to be talking, frequently glancing over Le Brun's shoulder in their direction to note the effects of his Munchausen-like tales upon them.

"Oh, you can talk as you like," said Searight in answer to some remark from Le Brun. "You can talk as you like, but we don't want any of your Imperial men here to boss the show in a Kaffir war; too much red-tape altogether. All right in a drawing-room or a barrack-room, but no good for the veldt in this country; that is my opinion. What did General Clarke do? He was supposed, too, to be a swagger Imperial man, wasn't he? He was not worth a little hang."

Le Brun, who always spoke in the mildest of voices, just above a whisper, felt it was incumbent upon him to resent this reflection on Imperial officers. "My deah fellah," he returned, with an emphasis on the "deah," "you are quite mistaken; I assure you, you take a wrong view of the matter; Clarke was not to blame at all, but the Cape Government. If they did not choose to supply him with sufficient men you can't blame him for not being such a fool as to risk his name by moving any further into Basutoland when he was not nearly strong enough. You talk about your Colonial men! Why I don't believe you can pick one out of the lot who can put a squad through the manual exercise."

"Is there not?" the Irishman warmly exclaimed, feeling the other was getting personal. "And that is about all your Imperial men can do. As I said before, barrack-rooms and drawing-rooms are about their mark. Look at the Transvaal War; why a few untrained Boers knocked fits out of your red-coated, red-taped warriors!"

"By gad, sir!" broke in Le Brun, as his face flushed, "they were brutally murdered, massacred by a cowardly lot of Dutchmen, who shot them down from behind rocks, and then cleared, afraid to come any time into the open. If it had not been for that ass Gladstone, Wood would have taught them a fine lesson, believe me."

This allusion to the Prime Minister was like throwing oil upon troubled waters; it put a stop to the hot argument, which was quickly descending to personalities.

"Yes," Searight returned. "I must own that Gladstone

is a confounded old woman. Things would have gone differently had Beaconsfield been in power, no doubt."

Then all sight was lost of the original discussion, "Imperial Officers *versus* Colonial," and the two "war-loafers" denounced in no measured language Mr. Gladstone and the Colonial Government, and then Afrianders and South Africa generally. Any stranger overhearing them would have been mystified why they had ever set foot in the country, and, having made that mistake, why they did not at once take the first mail steamer home.

The young Englishman sitting near them, but taking no part in the conversation, though scarcely of age, was of athletic build, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and above the medium height. His face had no pretension to good looks; it was pleasant, frank, and honest. The jaws were broad and strong, the neck short and powerful, whilst thin lips evinced a nervous determination. His wavy hair was a lightish brown, and a faint moustache was commencing to bud; his eyes were blue, bright, and soft, even timorous-looking, producing in the face a look of meekness which seemed in direct contradiction to the impression of strength imparted by the mouth and physique. He was dressed in that free and easy style one associates with the well-bred Englishman who spends most of his time in the country; a wide-awake, called in South Africa a "smasher"; a flannel shirt, sailor-knot tie, Norfolk jacket, and knickerbockers. His legs were very shapely, of which fact he seemed cognisant, as every now and again he stretched them out and scanned them approvingly.

This was Jack Senior, who, notwithstanding his youth, was a colonist of some experience, having already tried farming in Australia, where, through bad luck and bad management, he had lost in less than a year the little money inherited upon the death of his father. The latter, the younger son of an English squire, had been what is known as a "gentleman farmer" in the county of Kent.

Senior, who had been an officer in militia at home, on arriving in Africa had eagerly sought service when he heard of the Basuto War breaking out, and succeeded in obtaining a commission in the "Cape Pigeons."

He had now listened meditatively to his brother-officers' conversation, wondering how Searight could have the

effrontery to tell such falsehoods; how for the sake of the temporary effect produced on the youngsters sitting at the next table he could expose himself—well knowing it, too—to his comrades as a palpable liar. Everyone who had been at the front knew that Searight had shown the white feather repeatedly. What kind of a mind could such a fellow have? He pitied poor Le Brun, who had been fathering Searight's tales in a shamefaced way, nodding his head guiltily when appealed to to corroborate the incidents born of the Irishman's imagination. Then Senior began to think of his own affairs. He was puzzled to know what to do. He had proved himself well adapted for soldiering, but there was an end to that. No use going home to England to loaf on his friends, for sooner or later he would have to make a start for some other country. He was totally unfit for any kind of office-work. A good all-round athlete, he was physically strong, and not afraid to put his hands to any kind of manual work; but, alas! in South Africa all the labour was done by Malays, Kaffirs, Hottentots, and Bastards.* True, the Cape Government was about to raise a new regular corps, the Cape Infantry, and his four friends, at present in the bar, had come expressly to apply for commissions in this corps, but there were already six hundred applications for about twenty vacancies, and these applications included many from old campaigners and ex-Imperial officers.

He himself would not have the slightest chance, and at this moment he felt particularly young, miserable, and useless. Although impressed by the amount of confidence and self-assurance possessed by his war-loafing friends, and unconsciously looking upon them as superior beings to himself, his mind was of an observant and analysing nature, and he knew well that in general ability he was a long way ahead of them. "Yes," he said to himself, "it is their unbounded cheek that carries them through. They will be sure to drop on their legs somehow. It does not trouble them whether they get into debt or not. Doing a tailor down, leaving a poor washerwoman unpaid, and sticking up big hotel bills is only good fun to them."

One of the two who had been talking to the barmaid now turned round and invited them all to have a drink, pre-

*A name given to the half-breeds in South Africa.

facing his invitation by asking them if they knew "what the Governor of North Carolina said to the Governor of South Carolina."

"Yes," Searight answered, "'It is a long time between drinks.'"

"Yes, it is!" returned the other. "You must be thirsty with all your jawing. What are you going to have? The same again? All right. Maria, my dear, five whiskies and three sodas divided. Usher's Special, remember."

The girl in obedience to the request turned for the whisky, and in doing so took the opportunity of looking at her reflection critically in the large mirror fixed in the centre, between the rows of bottles on the shelves, and of placing her hands gently on her curls to assure herself that they were properly adjusted. Searight chaffed her about her conceit, as he termed it, and paid her at the same time some effusive compliments as to her personal appearance. He seemed to have a goodly share of the Irishman's blarney. The girl tossed her head and was evidently pleased. The five young Englishmen drank to one another's good health, using the following phrases, "Here's luck," "Here's ten thousand a year and a deer park," "Well, here's all the skin off your nose."

The two who had been talking to the barmaid were respectively named Richard Maller and Frederick Clifford Dorsby. The former was rather a good-looking young fellow. He had developed through hard drinking a sort of good-natured, muddled expression of face, resembling somewhat that of a Newfoundland pup. Maller, through the influence of his father, Colonel Maller, of the Yorkshire Hussars, had served as an attaché to one of the Imperial regiments in the Zulu War, after which he had returned to England. He had again come out on the outbreak of the Transvaal War, but, failing to secure service in any of the troops engaged in that campaign, had accepted a captaincy from Le Brun in the "Cape Pigeons." He was drunken and idiotic, and as a soldier perfectly useless.

Dorsby, a stout, stupid fellow, had served in many campaigns in South Africa. He claimed to have just come into a baronetcy, which, however, he said, unfortunately had but little money attached. His war-loafing comrades, although more than doubtful as to his veracity concerning

the baronetcy, now always introduced him as "Sir Frederick." They felt that it added to their own social position to have a baronet in their midst.

Curiously enough, all excepting Senior wore bangles on their wrists. The idea intended to be conveyed was that those ornaments were souvenirs given by fair damsels on the eve of the warriors' departure for the battlefield. Searight, a great boaster of conquests among the fair sex of all grades and classes, wore a lady's garter—a metal one.

Le Brun was the first to break the silence, after they had taken a sip of their liquor, by remarking in his mild voice that he wished they would hurry up with the Cape Infantry, for he would soon be running short. "I suppose," he went on, "it will be three or four months before a fellow will be gazetted. What can a fellow do in the meantime?"

"Oh," replied Searight, "I have a good mind to chuck up all thoughts of going into the service again. I have a good mind to go in for a canteen—pay splendidly, by Jove! Nigger canteen?—why, make a fortune in no time! It is about the only thing a gentleman can do in this beastly God-forsaken country."

"Yes, that is right enough," chimed in Dorsby, in a deep voice; "but, my dear chappie, you want some money to start with. Where is that to come from?"

Maller, who had excelled in his school-days on the horizontal bar, but could not now pull himself up once to his chin, said, "I have a jolly good mind to start a gymnasium."

"But that also requires money," Senior broke in, who now was taking a very lively interest in the conversation.

"You remember Jack Wellesly, don't you, Maller?" asked Searight. "He was at the taking of Morosi's Mountain, you know."

"Yes, I remember him well," replied Maller. "Decent chap, Jack—what of him?"

"Did you ever hear what he tried when he was hard up in Durban one time? He was dead stony broke and his credit clean played out; he did not know what to do. Well, Jack, you know, used to fancy himself with the foils and the gloves, and he struck the idea of giving lessons. He hired a good-sized room, and had put over his door a signboard, 'Lessons in Fencing and Boxing, by Captain

Wellesly.' By gad, he got no end of pupils—did first-rate. Well, one day a navvy—some contractor-Johnnie—comes along and knocks at the door. Jack opens it.

"'Hi, be you the man as boxes?' he asks.

"'I am the individual who teaches the art of boxing; my terms are so and so,' says Jack.

"'Well,' says the navvy, 'I be's a-going oop country to-morrow morning. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten bob for a spar; I'm fond of the sport, loikes.'

"Several of Jack's pupils were there, and they begged of him for the sport of the thing to put on the gloves with the fellow and knock him about a bit. So Jack agrees to it for the sake of the fun. They put on the gloves and started to box. The navvy-Johnnie goes for old Jack. Bing, bang, plunk, and in about two minutes, after hitting him all over the place, knocks him down, and Jack was so used up he couldn't go on again.

"'You be a foine fella to teach men how to foight,' says the navvy, 'when 'e can't foight a bit yerself!' and he walks out of the place in great disgust. Man, Jack got so quizzed over the business that he had to sling his hook from Durban. I don't know where he got to."

This tale produced much amusement and laughter. Searight then proposed going to the Masonic Hotel, where he was staying; having credit there, he would stand the "liquors." He held out the inducement of a new "tom" being at this establishment—meaning a new barmaid.

"What do you say to the theatre?" asked Le Brun.

"Oh, hang the theatre," returned Searight; "they have got on *Patience*, Gilbert and Sullivan's latest. I saw it when I went home, over a year ago. I could not stand seeing it out here after that. Come on, you fellows, let's go to the Masonic."

All seemed acquiescent as they moved to the door. Searight kissed his hand to the barmaid, and said, "By-bye, Naughty."

From the Masonic Hotel they went the rounds of all the bars in which there were barmaids. Senior would have given much to have got away from them, only he was shy of being thought different from the rest. He commenced to drink lemonade, however, in spite of their chaffing him about "shirking his liquor." The others began to fall

somewhat under the influence of oft-repeated whiskie, Maller, according to usual custom when intoxicated, started howling like a dog. This always annoyed Searight, who declared these yells of Maller's set his teeth on edge. Drink having the effect of making this Irishman pugnacious, he now told Maller if he did not dry up he would "smack him on the mouth." Maller retorted by declaring it would be the last "smack" he ever would give if he did. They would have come to blows had not Senior intervened. Dorsby remarked that, if they must fight, the best thing they could do was to wait until the next morning, when they could choose some unfrequented spot—the reservoir, for instance—where nobody would interfere with them, whereas if they started fighting in the streets they would certainly get "run in."

This sensible advice calmed the belligerents, and a meeting was arranged for half-past six the next morning. The excitement of the altercation, together with the liquor imbibed, proved, however, too much for Maller, who now showed signs of an illness. Searight, having cooled down considerably at the prospect of a fistic encounter in the early morning, evinced a sudden sympathy, taking his adversary's arm, upon which Le Brun, who always got maudlin in his cups, remarked to Dorsby, "Now that is what I call deuced good form. Good chap, Searight. You fellows," he went on in quite a pathetic tone, "make it up. What is the use of quarrelling amongst pals? Don't forget, boys, that you have been old comrades. Demme, no; shake hands, do."

Maller and Searight shook hands as requested, made profuse apologies, and swore eternal friendship, and Le Brun was visibly affected. Then the party broke up and went to their hotels. The Irishman borrowed a sovereign of Senior when saying good-night, and the latter, glad to get away, hurried to his hotel at the top of Plein Street. He walked up and down his room for some time, smoking his pipe. That story about Jack Wellesly had given him an idea. Senior, although somewhat lazy, had an abhorrence of debt. If he did not intend going to England it was time he made a start at something. He had arrived in Cape Town with thirty-five pounds, money saved from his lieutenant's pay. That amount would soon go, especially knocking about with fast fellows. Now,

why should he not give lessons in boxing? Had he not, during a three months' visit to Melbourne, taken lessons from Jem Mace, and shown such natural abilities and progress that the worthy old retired champion of England had insisted upon his taking part in a heavy-weight boxing competition for a silver cup and the amateur championship of Victoria? And although only about ten stones, did he not pull it off hands down? Mace once described him to a friend as the cleverest lad he had ever come across at his weight, either amongst professionals or amateurs. No praise could have been greater than this from such a renowned expert. He felt quite certain that he would not, like Wellesly, be found out an impostor. The social disadvantages of turning professional boxer never entered his mind. Not only was he unfitted for the post of a clerk, but his mind revolted at the idea. His life had always been free and independent. Then came thoughts of the notoriety he might gain through his becoming known as a good boxer. In all English-speaking countries, especially the colonies, a great amount of respect was accorded anyone who had the reputation of being able "to use the gloves." He pictured himself walking down Adderley Street and fellows turning round and pointing him out as the best boxer in Cape Town. This picture pleased his youthful fancy much. He finally decided to give the thing a trial, and he went to bed hopeful.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning after breakfast Jack Senior asked the proprietor of his hotel if he could tell him where he would be able to hire a room in a sufficiently central position. Being recommended to try at a house close to the hotel, 111 Loop Street, kept by a Mrs. Travers, he went there immediately. A little girl answered his knock at the front door.

"Yes," she said, in answer to his inquiry, "my ma is home; will you step in, please?"

Presently Mrs. Travers appeared. She was a woman of about thirty, tall, slender, with traces of past beauty, but a

worn-out look in her face, suggestive of worries. She had a small room to let furnished, 25s. a week; would he, she asked, step upstairs and have a look at it? Senior followed the lady. The room was meagrely furnished; two packing-cases covered with chintz, serving as washing-stand and toilet table, were among the chief items of its upholstery. Senior thought the room too small; had she not another one? he asked.

Mrs. Travers replied that there was one downstairs, but it was unfurnished, and used by the children as a play-room. Senior, when he saw it, thought the room would suit his purpose. There was a door opening into a long, narrow yard, at the end of which was another door leading into the street. Pupils could come backwards and forwards without troubling the inmates of the house. How much, he asked, would she charge him for the two rooms, the bedroom and this one? Mrs. Travers replied that, as one was unfurnished, she thought £2 per week would be a fair price; but what did he want with the unfurnished room? Senior's face as he explained his object reddened.

"Oh! I don't know if my husband would like one of his rooms let for that! If you will please come back between one and two, he'll be home for lunch, and then I'll let you know. He is in the Civil Service," she added, with a visible touch of pride.

Mr. Travers was duly informed of Senior's visit when he came home for his midday meal. This gentleman, though middle-aged, only enjoyed the position and salary of a junior clerk. However, he tried very hard to maintain a strict respectability, affecting to be most particular whom he introduced to his wife and family—the latter consisting of "six steps and stairs," as his mother-in-law wrathfully designated them; the eldest girl of nine being the first step, and the infant of two months being the last.

"A room for boxing!" repeated Mr. Travers. "Why, what does he look like? Is he a gentleman?"

"I don't exactly know, dear," returned his wife, "but he speaks like one. I thought he looked something like a soldier, but he is coming, at least he said he should, between one and two, when I told him you would be home."

After lunch the husband went on the *stoep* to smoke a pipe before returning to his work.

Soon Senior made his appearance. He took off his hat and bowed most politely as he asked the landlady whether he might have the room. Seeing the husband eyeing him with attention, he spoke, though almost unconsciously, rather affectedly, as if to impress upon them that he was something quite out of the ordinary line of professional boxers.

Mr. Travers was satisfied. He told Senior he should be very pleased to have him as a tenant, and then began jocosely commenting about the punching of heads generally.

"A gentleman! I should rather think so," said Mr. Travers, when Senior had gone. "I did not want him to open his mouth twice to tell that;" and in spite of his wife being born under the sunny clime of Africa, he added, "and he is no Africander either!" Mr. Travers was from the old country himself.

Senior advertised for pupils, and bought a few sets of gloves, sponges, towels, and other paraphernalia necessary for his new vocation. At first pupils came very slowly, and it was all he could do to make ends meet. At last by a stroke of luck he brought himself before the public in such a way that his name became established in Cape Town.

There was a young fellow, Merriion, a salesman in a gentlemen's outfitting establishment, considered by the youth of Cape Town a very clever amateur. He had won a middle-weight competition at the German Gymnasium before leaving London, and the few times he had essayed to put on the gloves at Cape Town had been always victorious. Supposing Senior was only some hard-up adventurer, knowing nothing about boxing, and who only wanted to fleece the unsuspecting athletically-inclined Capetonians, he bethought himself of a little scheme in which amusement might be caused to his friends and fame redound to himself. He would pretend to be a greenhorn, and get Senior to give him a spar before a select number of acquaintances.

Accordingly one day, Merriion, accompanied by six other salesmen belonging to different shops in town, all in a great state of anticipation, called upon Senior. The salesman asked if "Professor Senior" would give him a little spar; he had no time to take lessons, but he should be much obliged if he might have a little turn, just for

the sake of the exercise. No payment was offered for this privilege. But Senior, observing the amused, expectant faces of Merrion's friends, and having the story of "Jack Wellesly" fresh in his memory, suspected that there was some little surprise intended, which he might possibly turn to his own account. "Yes, he should be very happy," he replied. Merrion and he then stripped. After donning the gloves, they shook hands and started to box. Neither time nor number of rounds had been specified by either. Merrion, much to the amusement of the spectators, threw himself into a very awkward attitude. Senior soon discovered by the other's exaggerated attempts to act the novice, and by the way he looked round for appreciation, what the game was. The salesman, after some fooling, amidst the smothered merriment of his admirers, at length squared up in fairly good fashion, and let go his left and right viciously. Senior neatly avoided the blows by stepping back. At this Merrion looked serious; evidently the other knew a little more than he had thought. Next he tried a feint with the left, and then a swing with the right, but the other stopped the blow with ease.

Senior said, "I see you are hitting hard; do you mind if I hit hard also?"

Merrion laughed, and sneeringly replied, "Oh, no, not at all; I like to be knocked about when I can get anyone to do it."

Senior did not waste any time over the matter; he could easily see that not much boxing was required to settle his opponent, so he just started in-fighting, and soon had Merrion half dazed reeling about the room. The latter covered his head with his hands when he realised that he had but little chance with the other, and cried out, "Stop, stop! that is enough; you are much too good for me."

Senior desisting, pulled off the gloves. Merrion retired to a chair in a corner of the room, and, with elbows on knees, supported his aching head with his hands. The friends said nothing, they looked at one another and exchanged winks. Then the salesman suddenly rose up, and walking over to Senior, extended his hand and said in a manly, straightforward manner, "Shake hands, sir; you are the very best man I've ever met, and I've met a few."

Senior profited much by the affair, it proved a splendid

advertisement, and he got a number of pupils through it. His Basuto-war friends, who often looked him up, were greatly taken by the "Merrion" incident, and never tired of talking about it. "Blood would tell," Le Brun remarked; and that worthy soldier took a dozen lessons in boxing himself, and paid for them, too, having still a little money left. "One never knows," he said, "when one may have to use one's fists, knocking about this beastly country."

But after six months Senior realised that a permanent livelihood was not to be gained by teaching boxing in Cape Town; the hot weather had set in and there was scarcely a pupil left. The town was small, and naturally those desiring to learn the art of self-defence would be quickly exhausted. What should be his next step?

One evening, in the bar of the Theatre Royal, talking to the proprietor, a great admirer of his, two of his former pupils entered, accompanied by a tall young man of swarthy looks. Senior was invited by his pupils to have a drink, and, accepting, was then introduced to their friend, Mr. Marè, a colonial, whose talk was monotonous with egotism. He professed to be an excellent boxer, recounting several fights, and regaling his hearers with wonderful accounts of his intrepid riding, shooting, football playing, and other accomplishments. He emphasised everything with the expression "Man!" and interspersed among every few words a superfluity of the interrogative "Eh?"

Senior took advantage of a pause in Marè's self-exaltation to inform his late pupils that he proposed going to Kimberley shortly, to see if he could get anything to do in the mines.

"What? Do you want to get something to do in the mines, eh?" Marè broke in. "Man! I'll tell you what I'll do, eh? I'll give you a letter of introduction to one of the best men on the Fields. You see, man! I tell you he is one of the most influential men in the place. Oh, ya! Stewart is his name, and he is manager, you see, of the Violet Diamond Mining Company. He is a first-rate fellow, I tell you, eh?" and he then told a long story in which Mr. Stewart and he played a prominent but most uninteresting duet. Senior interrupted by asking whether Mr. Stewart was home or colonial born.

"Home-born, rather!" replied Marè, in a tone that unpatricially implied an admitted superiority.

"Man!" he went on, "the old chap, you see, is a Scotchman. Oh, ya! and a letter from me! why he'll do anything for you. Look here, I bet, eh? that he gets you a billet at once."

There and then Marè asked and obtained from the proprietor the necessary writing materials, wrote the letter, and read it aloud to Senior and his friends. He had described Mr. Senior as an "old and very particular friend." The other thanked him and put the letter in his pocket. Further conversation was put a stop to by the entrance of Maller accompanied by some of his acquaintances. This ex-irregular officer received the sum of ten pounds monthly from his father, on condition that he remained abroad out of the way of his friends and relations. The remittance for the ensuing month had come to hand this day, and Maller was proceeding, as fast as he could, to drink it out. The money usually lasted about a week, after which he endured a forced and sorrowful state of sobriety and semi-starvation until the next allowance. With him now were a small crowd of hangers-on, two bank clerks, three Civil servants, and a good-looking young Jew. As most of these gentlemen were in receipt of small salaries, and their positions required that they should be well and somewhat fashionably attired, they had very little money to spend on the luxury of drinking the expensive liquors imported, so that the monthly remittance of Maller, who lived in the same boarding-house, was always eagerly looked forward to by them.

Senior, as soon as he caught sight of Maller, wished his party "Good night," and tried to slip away unobserved. He always found Maller a nuisance, especially when drinking. The fellow would stick to him like a leech, and, under the shelter of his boxing reputation, would become exceedingly offensive to everyone with whom he came into contact.

Maller, however, espied him, and, rushing forward, caught and dragged him to his friends. He introduced him to them with no little pride, remarking, "I say, if any of you want to fight, you know, just go outside and have a couple of rounds with Senior."

The young Jew answered, "No, thanks, not taking any," and they all laughed.

"Have you heard the latest about Dorsby and Searight?" Maller asked.

"No," Senior replied, "I have not seen them for a week or so. Why? Is there anything up?"

"I should think so! They have made a clear-off to Kimberley, and let in old Dick Grey, at the Masonic, for nearly £300 between them. Old Dick was getting a bit uneasy, you know, a little impatient about being put off from month to month. Dorsby used to get letters, large businesslike envelopes, addressed to 'Sir Frederick Clifford Dorsby.' These, he told the old chap, were from his solicitor in England, and always contained some reason for his not sending the draft for £1,000 that Dorsby had been expecting for the last six or seven months. Searight's tactics were about the same; he used to write letters to himself and sign his father's name to them. Besides some religious cant he copied out of tracts—for old Grey would not have believed they came from a parson unless they had some of this stuff in—there was an allusion to some little temporary obstacle in realising certain property of the son; and each letter always ended up with the certainty of a good big sum of money being remitted in a mail or two—he was always careful to add the 'two,' to give him some scope, don't you know. But the old Johnnie got fly at last, and told them that if they did not pay up by the next week, besides seizing their effects, he would sue them, not only for debt, but for obtaining money and goods under false pretences. Dorsby was in a deuce of a funk, on account of the baronetcy business, I suppose, coming to light; but Searight hit upon an idea. They got all their things out, a little at a time, when the coast was clear, and gave them to young Marks here to keep for them. He advanced them, you know, enough money to take them up to Kimberley. They started off this morning, and I don't believe old Grey knows of it yet. Won't he swear when he finds out how they have done him a shot?"

Maller and his friends laughed appreciatively at Searight's smartness and the anticipated wrath of the hotel-keeper. Senior, too, joined, though faintly, in the merriment, feeling at the same time a strong disgust at

what he had just heard, but being morally afraid to show it. It was strange, he thought, that here were two fellows who would be grossly insulted if they were not spoken of as gentlemen, yet who deliberately went and stayed at an expensive hotel, smoked the best cigars, drank the dearest wines, invited their friends to dinner, and frequently borrowed money from the proprietor to spend elsewhere, well knowing that they would be unable to pay. Yes; and here, too, were a lot of young fellows, also thinking themselves entitled to be called gentlemen, who thought the whole thing good fun, and really admired Searight and Dorsby for having so acted. Well, in his opinion, they were much worse than burglars; the latter did take upon themselves great risks; some element of courage was required in breaking into a house. This atmosphere of dishonesty depressed Senior. Maller tried to persuade him to join them in a drink, but, not feeling at all at home in such society, he pleaded an important engagement and managed to escape.

CHAPTER III.

A MONTH later Senior left for the Diamond Fields. Le Brun, the only friend to whom he had mentioned the time of his departure, came to see him off at the Cape Town Station.

Beaufort West, an inland town, then the terminus of the railway, was reached after a twenty-four hours' wearisome journey. Then Senior, with eleven other passengers, took his seat in the coach, to which were harnessed fourteen sturdy well-conditioned horses. The other travellers were of a mixed assortment; three young Colonial Dutch women, stout, unshapely, and plain-looking; three Cockneys, familiar in manner, cheerful and lively through the charm of novelty, having just arrived from home; an elderly Boer, tall, grave, and silent, with long matted hair and full beard, accompanied by his son, a lanky and awkward youth; a middle-aged commercial traveller, bald-headed, with mutton-chop whiskers, looking

bored and cross; and three young men, flashily dressed, and wearing numerous diamond ornaments.

The coach took six days to Kimberley. What a dreary journey it was! What a desolate, barren, monotonous country they passed through! Plain after plain, with only here and there a flat-topped kopje dotting the arid wastes. The only vegetation visible was the karoo bush, which forced itself up between the sharp stones, everywhere plentiful. Sometimes a herd of springbok would create a little interest, as, disturbed by the approach of the coach, they would bound away in leaps till lost to sight on the horizon. The accommodation-houses—mostly Dutch farmhouses that had been turned to profitable account by their proximity to the main highway—provided but wretched fare and scanty cleanliness. There was general heartfelt gladness when the coach drew up at the Central Hotel, Kimberley, surrounded by the usual crowd; the arrival of the mail being an event of weekly importance.

Having secured a room in the hotel, Senior made for the dining-room, where lunch was on. The room was crowded by many conditions of men, all having an air of general prosperity. They were noisily free-and-easy; everyone appearing to be talking and laughing at the same time. Much thirst was evinced by the loud cries that were being continually made of "Bar, bar!" to the waiter who attended to orders for that apartment.

As Senior was standing at the entrance taking stock, he suddenly heard his name shouted out. Looking in the direction of the voice, he espied Searight and Dorsby sitting at a small side table in one of the far corners of the room. After shaking hands with them he sat at the same table. It was pleasing to see familiar faces, although he was conscious of a certain uncomfortable feeling as he remembered what Maller had told him about cheating the proprietor of the Masonic Hotel. Giving his orders to the waiter, he then told them the latest Cape Town news; how Le Brun had got a captaincy in the Cape Infantry, and so on.

"I say, old chappie," broke in Searight, "what did old Dick Grey say when he found out that we had cleared? I suppose he was in a devil of a rage? By-the-by, be careful not to mention a word about it to anyone here. Was 't not bally well managed? By Jove, though, you know,

we had to leave all our jewellery and a lot of our best togs with that beastly young cad Marks as security for tin he advanced to pay our way up here. We had to give him a promissory note, too, at three months for just double the amount we got from him."

Senior, not heeding Searight's inquiry as to the wrathful utterances of the deceived hotel proprietor, turned to Dorsby and asked him how he had been getting on.

"Oh, all right," he growled.

"Dorsby?" broke in Searight, "why, famously. He knows everybody, does Sir Frederick. Made an honorary member of both clubs, Kimberley and Du Toits Pan, and owes already—how much money do you owe, Dorsby?"

"Ask me another," replied Dorsby, with a short guffaw, and then they all laughed. Senior, shaking his head, said in a bantering way, "By Jove! Well, you fellows know how to do it," but he could not help feeling disgusted with his friends, and with himself also for concealing the disgust.

"By heavens!" Searight said, "this is the place for my money, or at least my want of money. I only had ten bob when I arrived. I came here to the Central, and ordered a room as if I had thousands; drank my large bottle of English beer at lunch—3s. 6d. a bottle, if you please. Well, the night I came I ran across a party playing faro, and I chipped in. What do you think! I ran my ten bob into twenty-five quid before I knocked off. I thought that was good enough for me for one night, and so home I came to the hotel. I took a look into the billiard-room. There were six fellows playing black pool, Sovereign a ball. I sat down and watched their game for a while. I soon saw that there was not a better player amongst them than myself, and a good many worse. I took a cue. We played till five the next morning, and I knocked off a winner of £103. Not bad, eh? I made £128 out of the ten bob. By Jove, they know how to plunk the money down here. There are tons of it knocking about. You never saw such a place as this."

After lunch Searight volunteered to take Senior round the town and show him the sights. As they passed out into the principal thoroughfare, Du Toits Pan Road, a Kaffir borne on a stretcher by four other Kaffirs passed them by.

"A mine accident," explained Searight. "Every day nearly there are two or three niggers killed."

The streets were coated with a fine grey dust, which rose in luminous clouds at the least provocation, and together with the rays of the sun reflected from the iron structures caused a blinding glare that made Senior's eyes ache.

The buildings, mostly of corrugated iron, were very irregular. The shops, unpretentious in structure, displayed the richest and best of everything in their windows, plainly denoting that the inhabitants of the Diamond Fields were fastidious and luxurious in their tastes. A brick building could be seen here and there, made conspicuous by the scarcity of such substantiality. Little home-made shanties, manufactured out of the tin lining of packing cases, were numerous, especially in the back streets and outskirts. There were a few places of worship, at which a faint attempt at more than ordinary Diamond Fields architecture had been made. Bars seemed to be profusely scattered everywhere; in fact, the buildings in some streets were all employed in the retail sale of liquor.

Kimberley seemed to be a busy, bustling place. Cape carts, driven by Malays and Cape boys, rattled up and down the streets in numbers. Men of all nations, colours, and complexions thronged the thoroughfares—Indians, Arabs, Kaffirs of all tribes, Europeans, from the swarthy Italian to the fair, blue-eyed Scandinavian; and those of the Hebrew race seemed very numerous.

The Diamond Market was at length reached. It was situated in two short streets running parallel. On both sides were regular rows of small offices built of iron, through the windows of which were seen diamond-buyers in their shirt-sleeves, busy sorting diamonds in small piles, according to size and colour, on large sheets of white paper, placed on a wooden counter facing the window. Brokers were continually running in and out of the offices, satchels in hand, from which they produced diamonds in small, neatly-folded, white paper parcels, inviting the inspection of the buyers. The majority of the dealers were Jews, who, though from all parts of the world, retained the characteristics of their own race, resembling in a marked manner the inhabitants of the different countries they hailed from. In the streets were gathered knots

of idlers gossiping lazily. The bars, of which there were about half a dozen, with billiard-rooms attached, were full, many of the frequenters, although it was still early in the afternoon, gambling at games of cards, dice, and dominoes. There was also a perpetual click of billiard balls.

The Kimberley Mine was at the far end of the market. A great yawning chasm it appeared to Senior, as he gazed upon it somewhat awestruck. All the companies, having been only recently floated, and their working capital being yet unexhausted, were at work. The iron tubs, which with their contents of diamondiferous soil or reef were running up by means of steam power, the empty ones descending at the same time, made a peculiar trilling sound as they travelled on the wire runners.

Kaffirs, like swarms of ants, were to be seen working at the bottom of the mine, under the supervision of white overseers, whose duty it was to see that the precious gems were not stolen. Senior thought of the Kaffir whom he had seen carried along on the stretcher, and the many lives lost in trying to unearth these stones held in so much value simply for ornaments; then, thinking of those of whom he had heard so much, the illicit diamond buyers, more generally known as the I.D.B., he wondered how many of them had forfeited the best years of their lives by being tempted to buy stolen diamonds from the Kaffir workmen. His mind then turned into a more cheerful channel—that of the large number of men who through this great industry got employment and the highest wages. Surely he too might get work here. Turning to Searight, he asked him if there would be a good chance of a fellow getting something to do in the mines.

"I should think so," replied the other; "any decent fellow can, for instance, get a billet as overseer, watching that the niggers don't steal. Nothing to do but sit down all day long, and keep your eyes on them. Must be frightfully tedious, though; from sunrise to sunset no one to speak to. I could not stand it—by Jove, no! I would not do it for twenty pounds a week, and the wages of an overseer are only from five to seven pounds, with a percentage on the finds."

"Why, that is splendid pay!" Senior broke in. "I wonder if I could get an overseer's billet?"

"Of course you could, if that is the sort of thing you want," replied the other in a tone of disparagement. "It would not suit me, though. I shall try to get hold of something decent while I am about it. The way to work it is to get in with the best people to begin with—never let them know you are after a billet at all—but get to know them well first, and keep your eyes open for something soft."

"Yes, but I am such a fearful duffer; I am not fit for anything that requires any special education or training."

"Oh! what does that matter? There are lots of things going, I expect, where the only necessary qualification is to be a gentleman," Searight returned, with a superior air.

They wandered about the town. The country around was all flat and barren, like that Senior had passed through on his journey up from Beaufort West. The only vegetation visible was a scrubby thorn bush here and there. Heaps of tailings—the débris formed by the diamondiferous soil after being put through the washing machinery—were the only things approaching hills that relieved the monotony; but these, by their dazzlingly white, powdery, parched look, only added to the arid appearance of the general flatness.

Eventually Searight took Senior to a bar, the "Red Light," which was a noted haunt of I.D.B.s and individuals of like kidney, situated in one of the main streets, and quite close to the mines. This place, strange to say, Searight explained, was run by two very respectable fellows, who were fast making their fortunes.

"Now," said he, before entering, "I want to give you a tip. You will have to be very careful with whom you are seen talking in Kimberley. There is a deal of caste here, I can tell you! Card-sharps and swindlers are all right—people are very liberal and indulgent as regards them—but I.D.B.s are not tolerated at all, though there are some very decent fellows who go in for that too."

The bar of the "Red Light" was filled to overflowing. There were a few Austrians, Italians, Irishmen, still fewer Englishmen, and several nondescripts. The Petticoat-laner, of London, appeared to be well represented. The language, generally speaking, was startling in its coarse-

ness and profanity. Although the customers were decidedly low, their tastes were evidently expensive in the way of liquid refreshment, for champagne was being called for *ad libitum*. One of the proprietors was behind the bar, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, attending in a bustling manner to the numerous orders. He was addressed familiarly always as "Chorles," and seemed to be popular. Chorles was a man about thirty, inclined to corpulency. He had smiling blue eyes and a frank, handsome face, which looked conspicuously honest in contrast with the roguish features of those around.

After a split whisky-and-soda, Searight and Senior passed into the billiard-room adjoining. This was crowded by the same kind of humanity. All eyes were directed on a game of skittle pool. The players were a tall, dark, cadaverous man, pretentiously dressed, and a short man of florid complexion and jovial looks, attired in the unrestrained garb of the digger.

"That fellow there, the striker," said Searight, pointing to the taller one, "is a celebrated billiard sharp. His name is Tinlin, son of General Tinlin, of the British Army. He is supposed to be a good hand with his fists, and does a lot of bouncing on the strength of it. The other fellow is some digger-johnnie on the spree, I suppose; he is 'doing down.' Don't you see the fellow is a good bit on?" he added, as the digger missed hitting his ball twice and then gave an idiotic laugh.

They were playing for high stakes; it seemed to Senior like downright robbery. He told Searight so, and that he felt half inclined to interfere.

"People mind their own business here, I tell you, and take my advice, you do the same," said Searight in an undertone. "Besides, I know Tinlin; not a bad sort of chap to speak to."

"Surely a man can at least try and earn his living honestly. I can't see how a man can be a gentleman unless he does."

"Well, then, you'll find precious few gentlemen here. When you are in Rome you must do as Rome does," and Searight laughed.

At this moment a friend of the drunken digger who was playing came in; a little thin fellow with a hard shrivelled face.

"Hi, Bill," he said, "where did you get to? I've been looking for you all over the place. Come on, finish your game and let us go down to the Pan. We have to start those new boys on to-morrow."

"Ash all right, Jack," responded the other, as he gave a drunken laugh. Tinlin eyed the new-comer severely, then, it being his turn to play, he succeeded in knocking down the pin he aimed at, and, taking a wooden marble out of his waistcoat pocket, he threw it on the table, saying, "That is the sugar, I think."

The marker picked it up: "Thirteen marble? Yes, that's right; eighteen on the slate makes you thirty-one."

The digger laid down his cue at the repeated request of his friend, seemingly good-naturedly acquiescent. He slowly put his hand into his pocket as he rocked gently to and fro, and with some difficulty pulling out five sovereigns, the amount he had lost on the last game, handed them to Tinlin.

"Come on, Bill," said the sharper, "have one more—just one more. Put up the pins, marker."

"Jack wishes me—go home, you know," the other returned.

"Look heah, sir," Tinlin said in a bumptious tone, addressing the friend. "What do you mean by interrupting our game in this manner? I should very much like to know what the devil you mean!"

The other explained at some length about the fresh gang of Kaffir boys that had to be started to work in the morning early in a claim that he and Bill were working. From his manner he appeared to be in much fear of the billiard sharp's physically resenting his interference with "doing down" his mate. Tinlin, seeing this, became still more blustering and abusive. "By Jove!" he said, "if you fellows don't know manners, serve you dem well right if you had them knocked into you!"

"Oh! All right, Mr. Tinlin," said Jack, "if Bill wants to play he can, I won't stop him; he knows his own business best," and then he added in a low voice, "Even although he is boozed," which observation, though not intended to be, sounded somewhat satirical and tickled the humour of many standing near.

"What is that?" exclaimed Tinlin, angrily, who, not

hearing his last remark, thought by the laughter that something had been said about him.

"Nothing, Mr. Tinlin! I said nothing!" said the little digger, feeling really frightened as the sharper advanced with menacing looks, "I only said—I only said——"

"What did you say?"

"Well, I only said that you were a gentleman, and you wouldn't mind letting Bill come home with me, because he is boozed."

More laughter followed, and Tinlin, feeling perplexed at the cause of the merriment, and not being quite sure whether or not he was appearing a fool, said, "Oh, clear out and give us a rest."

Jack in haste caught his mate by the arm and dragged him away, who, with hands in breeches pockets, had been listening to the altercation with a bland meaningless smile.

Senior, who had made up his mind to take the little digger's part if Tinlin resorted to violence, felt slightly disappointed. Searight and he then went back into the bar-room, the former insisting on "another drink."

Tinlin followed close upon them, and Searight invited him to join.

"Oh, thanks. I'll have a lime-juice and soda," said the sharper, who was most abstemious.

"Oh, do you know my friend Senior?" Searight said. "No?" And then he introduced them.

"How de do?" said the sharper in a drawling affected voice, evidently wishing to impress the young stranger with the idea that he was a man of breeding. "Lately arrived, aw?" and he held out his hand patronisingly; and Senior, his cheeks tingling with shame, took it.

"Yes, I arrived only to-day by the coach," replied the latter, feeling miserably young and weak for not having sufficient moral courage to snub this man, who was in his eyes infinitely worse than an ordinary pickpocket, and yet overawed him by his patronising airs and assumption of superiority.

"Come on, Searight, let us go," he said in his disgust.

"Oh, all right," returned the other, "but let us first go into the gambling-room. This way, through the bar."

Five players were seated around a small table. One was throwing the dice out of a wooden dice-box. His face was

long and thin, his eyes bloodshot, his head was nearly bald. He had side-whiskers and moustache, dark in colour. He was rather well dressed, had on a long-tail coat and spotless white waistcoat, which, being low cut, allowed a broad expanse of white shirt to be seen. The cast of his features was decidedly Hebraic. He spoke with a pronounced foreign accent as he kept jabbering incessantly, his voice rising and falling with peculiar inflection. Immediately on this person's right sat a stout middle-aged man, so respectable-looking that Senior thought that his being there had a most incongruous effect. Next on the same side was a coarse stout man, with eyes like gimlet-pierced holes. As the dice were being thrown, he kept exclaiming, in a meaningless way, "O bli' me! O bli' me!" On the other side sat two corpulent Jews. There were small piles of sovereigns on the table, the amounts of the wagers.

Searight took Senior aside and whispered. "That fellow with the box," he said, "is Fagenstine, one of the characters of the place, a noted I.D.B., card sharper, and acknowledged to be the cleverest electioneering agent in Kimberley. The candidate who secures his services is as good as elected. Of course, it simply means a matter of who can give him the largest sum of money. He is rare good company—full of funny stories. Everybody speaks to him, although he is an I.D.B., I suppose on account of his electioneering influence. Tinlin and he work together; the former 'lumbers' the 'mugs,' and the other takes them down. The respectable-looking old chap is Dr. Crowlet, an American. He has one of the biggest practices on the Fields, but is a terrible gambler, and has lost two or three fortunes. Why, several card sharpers live on what they make out of him alone. I should not wonder if this is a 'joint cutting him up.' That fat-looking brute with the small eyes is a fellow called Weeder, an I.D.B. He has been giving lessons at your old game, boxing, as well; supposed to be a good sparrer, but no fighter—no heart. They say he has just done a splendid bit of business. Made a fortune over a parcel of large stones he got dirt cheap. He is going home next week, he says, to run a pub. in Liverpool. These two Jews on the other side are illicit. The one near here is Ikey Mosetenstine, absolutely the biggest I.D.B. on the

Fields, and the other, Elias Eliason, is also a big buyer, though nothing like Ikey. They are playing a game called 'hazards.' Fagenstine has to throw eight with the two dice; that is his main; if he throws seven he loses. The eight is a level-money chance in gambling circles in Kimberley, though in other places the odds are five to four against it."

Fagenstine kept invoking his main as he threw the dice by saying, "A six deuce, a thousand pounds, it's a six and a leetle deuce."

"A deuce five," the others responded each time.

At length seven was thrown, and Fagenstine, with an oath, threw down the box and said, "Bli' me, I wouldn't trow a main to-day, not if I vas starving."

In the pause that ensued the gamblers looked at the intruders for the first time, and Fagenstine said familiarly, "Oh, how you vas, Mr. Searight?"

"Thanks, I'm all right. Pulling the chips in, eh, Fagenstine?"

Then Searight and Senior went out, and the gamblers bent their eyes eagerly on their game.

CHAPTER IV.

THE following day Senior made inquiries as to the whereabouts of the Violet Diamond Company. He had decided to try for employment as an overseer, the wages being good and the duties requiring no special skill.

The Violet Company's property was situated in the vicinity of Du Toits Pan, a digging township, three miles from Kimberley. Dorsby volunteered to go with Senior to the "Pan," as the place was called in abbreviation, and help him to make inquiries. They arrived at noon. Du Toits Pan, Senior found, was much after the style of Kimberley, only much smaller and less pretentious. Kaffirs thronged the main street, some with blankets on, others with but a narrow soiled band round their waists.

At Dorsby's suggestion the cart drew up at the Du Toits Pan Club, a small iron one-storied building, with stoep

and verandah in front. A few thirsty creepers were clinging feebly to the trellis work which ornamented the wooden supports of the verandah. Dorsby and Senior passed through into the front sitting-room, in the far wall of which was a large square opening into the bar.

The barman in answer to Dorsby's inquiry said the boss was in the billiard-room; he would fetch him if they would wait a minute. The manager soon made his appearance. He was a young, gentlemanly-looking fellow. Dorsby, addressing him familiarly as Willie Bole, suggested drinks, which were accordingly called for, the fictitious baronet signing a "good-for" for the amount. Senior was impressed by this effrontery.

Willie Bole, on being asked if he knew Mr. Stewart, the manager of the Violet Company, said yes! that he was a member of the club. If they desired to see him, the better plan would be to come back at lunch time, when Mr. Stewart would be sure to be in, whereas if they went to the mine they might miss him.

Senior and Dorsby strolled round the town for an hour, returning to the club to find Mr. Stewart having luncheon in the dining-room. They sent in their names, and after a few minutes the well-known Violet manager appeared, napkin in hand. He was a powerfully-built Scotchman, broad, square-shouldered, and athletic-looking in spite of his fifty years and more. He had a broad face with large features, dark hair, moustache, and a close-cropped beard. His eyes, restless as any monkey's, were of a greenish-grey, and gleamed brightly under shaggy, frowning eyebrows. The whole expression of his face denoted shrewdness approaching cunning, and great determination.

Dorsby was introduced as Sir Frederick Dorsby, whereupon the Scotchman, after shaking hands, said, "Just excuse me a while, please, I want to speak to Mr. Bole for one moment on a little business matter." Then, taking the club manager into a corner, he inquired audibly, "Did Mr. Snag call for me? For you know that—" Gradually his voice sank till it reached a whisper, and he asked, "Who did you say the now? Sir Frederick who? Who is the man?"

Willie Bole told him all he knew about Dorsby, adding, "I think he is all right."

Mr. Stewart was interested at once; titled men were

scarce in these parts; besides, he was very partial to the society of swells.

Senior produced Marè's letter of introduction when Mr. Stewart rejoined them. The Scotchman carefully scanned the handwriting on the envelope, and slowly shook his head as if puzzled. He then extracted the letter and commenced to read it, glancing over the sheet from time to time at Senior. After he had finished reading, he again shook his head slowly and laughed quietly. Senior felt uneasy.

"Man! but it is funny," Mr. Stewart began, talking with a Scotch accent. "Do you see, but I don't quite remember this Marè. I must be getting auld and silly, don't ye understand; but as sure as death I don't mind him. Who is he?"

Senior, with his face all ablaze, told him as far as he could.

"Yes, I suppose I must have met him," the other returned; "but anyway, there is no use in standing here. Have you lunched yet? No? Then come and have a bit of lunch with me. This way," said the mine manager affably, as he conducted them into the dining-room, and to one of the small tables that crowded the room.

The majority of those present were dressed in the careless, digging style: flannel shirts, moleskin trousers, and, for the sake of the etiquette demanded at meal-times, tweed jackets. They were nearly all connected with mine work, principally managers, engineers, and private diggers.

Mr. Stewart proved good company. Influenced by the supposed selectness of his guests, he exerted himself to be entertaining. Many amusing anecdotes were told of things that had happened in the early days of the Fields, and so coloured by his fertile imagination that he himself could not help laughing heartily at his own absurd descriptions. He gave them to understand that he was a keen sportsman. Horse-racing, cock-fighting, foot-racing, dog-fighting—he was fond of them all. "But, man," he went on, "I am simply terribly fond of pugilism. I would walk fifty miles to see two good men fight. In my estimation it is the best and manliest sport of the whole lot." He enumerated many of the old fights he had witnessed at home in "the

good old days when the prize-ring was in its zenith." Old Tom Sayers and he had been great pals. "Ay, man," he said, "he was the best little man the world ever saw, I'm telling you." He related with great pride how, when walking arm-in-arm with the renowned Tom in the Zoological Gardens, Edinburgh, shortly after his great fight with Heenan, the people did not know which was which. "You see," he went on, "we were so much alike, the same square shoulders, same height, same sort of face, you know. Ay, even his nose, man, was exactly like mine, you see," and he caressed that organ with thumb and forefinger in affectionate remembrance of the other which had borne the brunt of many a smashing blow.

Dorsby thought of telling Mr. Stewart of his friend's prowess in the noble art, but on second thoughts desisted. "After all," he recollected, "it is not quite the thing for a gentleman to earn his living by giving boxing lessons, and probably Senior would not like it mentioned."

Lunch over, they adjourned to the billiard-room, where coffee was brought. Senior was anxious to ascertain what chances there were of obtaining employment as overseer, but felt bashful to broach the subject. At last he blurted out awkwardly, "May I speak to you for a few minutes, Mr. Stewart, please?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the Scotchman, but a suspicious look came into his face. He had had some experience of the young English adventurer, and was now on his guard. He wondered if the "remittance dodge" was going to be tried on him.

"Let us go out on the stoep," he said.

After they were seated outside Senior made a plunge.

"I am awfully sorry, Mr. Stewart," he began, "but I only met Mr. Marè one night in the theatre bar at Cape Town. He said he was a particular friend of yours." Senior paused, but, the other keeping silent, he went on, "I happened to say that I intended coming up here to see if I could not get a billet in one of the mines. Then he offered to give me a letter to a Mr. Stewart, who, he said, was a mine manager and one of the most influential men in Kimberley. Senior again paused, flattering himself that he was becoming quite diplomatic, and that his last observation might draw the other out. Mr. Stewart rather liked Mr. Marè's estimate of him, but, thinking that it

might only be a piece of soft soap preparatory to trying the remittance dodge, still held his peace.

"Could you give me any idea, Mr. Stewart," Senior at last proceeded, "whether I can get a billet in any of the companies as an overseer? You see, I cannot do anything—I mean in the way of office work—and I believe I could do right enough as an overseer, as I am told that a man only requires to be sober, honest, and watchful—I think I could guarantee to be all three."

Still Mr. Stewart did not offer to make any remark, and Senior felt awkward at the continued silence.

He, however, went on, "I should think that in a place like this, where so much labour is required, there would be some opening for a strong young fellow like me."

The mine manager, who was experiencing a feeling of disappointment, remained mute. After all, he had been wasting his pearls of entertainment on the ordinary species of English gentleman loafer. And he had thought them swells travelling for the sake of pleasure.

Senior, somehow divining the thoughts passing through the other's mind, said, "I have a little money, enough to keep me for three or four months; but I should like to get into something as soon as possible."

Mr. Stewart at last condescended to speak. "Well," he said, in a frigid tone, "if I hear of anything that I think might suit you, I'll let you know; I'll tell Willie Bole here."

The Scotchman hinted, by looking at his watch impatiently, that he wanted to get away.

Senior, remembering how enthusiastic this man had been when speaking of pugilism, and thinking that he might win a more favourable opinion if the other were to be informed of his skill in the art of boxing, now said, "When I arrived in Cape Town after the Basuto War I could not, in fact I never tried to, get a situation, knowing it was useless, so I took to giving lessons in boxing." (Mr. Stewart showed signs of interest.) "I won a heavy-weight competition in Melbourne, one that Jem Mace got up. I was a pupil of his, and though only a light-weight, he thought it good enough for me to enter; and I won it easily enough, too." And Senior looked a little vain as he thought of his prowess in accomplishing this feat. "I did fairly well in Cape Town, but in a few months worked

the place out; and then I thought I should try my luck up here—not at boxing I mean.”

The young Englishman saw that his plan had succeeded. The Scotchman was looking at him now with eyes full of interest. Long and slowly he scanned Senior, like a horse-dealer would the points of some promising colt of pedigree. Mr. Stewart was wondering if he were a dark horse, and he owned to himself that he had discovered a likely-looking lad. The physical developments, when he came to look at them closely, were satisfactory. The face as well was a good fighting one, a little too mild and intelligent, but there was a look of firmness about it. He appeared to be a nice quiet, modest fellow. The old Scotchman considered himself a judge of character. It was the truth the lad had told him, of that he was sure. He might be able to do something with him. They were such fools on the fields, very fond of a fight, but not knowing a duffer from a good man. What fun it would be to take them down with a youngster like this, and a gentleman, too. No one would suspect that this simple, gentlemanly chap could fight. But he must be cautious, he would not even think of anything until he had given him a trial. He said to Senior:

“Well, you know, as I said before, I’ll have a look round and see. I am full-handed myself, but—eh—in the meantime—yes, I’ll see what I can do. I may be able—in fact, it’s likely—I’ll find something; but we’ll see. I’ll tell you, though, what you might do, just to oblige me, don’t ye understand—have a bit spar with a fellow I know here. He is not much good. Oh, no! but he fancies himself a bit. Oh, yes, he does that. Man! I’m terribly fond of seeing a bit of decent boxing. Will you do this for me?”

“Oh! yes, with pleasure,” returned Senior, who was pleased at the idea of displaying his skill before such an appreciative spectator.

It was therefore arranged that he was to dine with Mr. Stewart at half-past six on the following evening at the Du Toits Pan Club, and afterwards box this fellow, who, as Mr. Stewart said, “fancied himself.”

“Does it not strike you,” said Dorsby, as they were driving back to Kimberley, “that people here seem to talk and think a good deal about boxing and fighting? I

never heard so much pugilistic talk in any other place. Perhaps you have not had time to notice it, but I have. This and that man is pointed out with awe and respect, as being a good hand with his fists, as if he were a small god."

"Oh! I suppose," the other returned, "it is always the same in these digging places. You see, at first start off there would be very little law and order, and a good deal of 'might is right.' I can quite understand how a man handy with his fists would become quite a power, and be respected accordingly. And then, even after the place gets civilised, it takes some time for the old traditions to die out."

"But Dorsby, old man, what are you going to try to get into?"

"Oh, I am sure I don't know," returned the other; "I must have a look round one of these days, I suppose—plenty of time, though; no use being in a cast-iron hurry."

This young Englishman was lazy and useless—fond of good eating and drinking. He was fit for nothing. Although claiming to be a baronet, he put on no airs. His clothes were shabby and ill-fitting, and he always looked slovenly. He would talk or drink with anyone, and all this gave an air of genuineness to his pretended title. No person could comprehend a man like Dorsby trying to pass himself off as a baronet unless he really were one. True, he gained credit through it for a certain period, and also was enabled to make acquaintances who were willing to entertain him for a time. He seemed, however, such a stupid good-natured fellow that Senior wondered how he could have originated the baronet-idea, which he felt certain was pure fiction. He knew what the end would be, so far as Kimberley was concerned—Dorsby would get up to his eyes in debt, and again try to clear to pastures new.

At dinner that evening Searight wanted to know where they had been the whole day.

"A beastly hole that Du Toits Pan," he remarked, when they informed him of their visit there. "Fellows dress like navvies, most of them: a hanged lot of outsiders."

Senior disagreed with him; he rather liked their style. Then commenced a discussion as to how men should

dress. Senior said, "I hate to see fellows aping the London style in an out-of-the-way place like Kimberley, where the climate is so hot, too. What ridiculous figures those asses cut with their stand-up collars, black coats, kid gloves, and so forth! As a rule it is men who never have had the chance before to act the swell who go in for that sort of thing. In my opinion men ought to dress entirely for comfort, and not allow themselves to be ruled by custom. I see no reason why they should not go about in pyjamas. Well, there would be nothing indecent about it, anyhow," he said, as the other two laughed at the absurdity of the idea. "Custom is everything, and people get used to anything in time. Ladies go to balls in a state of semi-nudity, and, because it is the fashion, nothing is ever thought about it."

"I never heard such rot," said Searight; "it is simply a matter of this: if a man wants to move in the society of gentlemen, he must dress as gentlemen do. If a fellow insists on dressing as a costermonger, then let him mix with costermongers."

"Well, how should a gentleman dress?" asked Senior.

"As other gentlemen do, of course," he replied sententiously.

Dorsby, who seldom expressed an opinion about anything, pronounced Senior's notions to be utterly foolish.

The latter laughingly asked him why he did not act up to his opinion. Dorsby returned, "Oh, anything is good enough for this outlandish country."

After dinner Dorsby left his two friends to call upon a family where, he said, with a wink, there were "some deuced pretty girls."

Searight suggested to Senior that they should go to the "Prince Imperial Hall," where there was a dance that night.

The Prince Imperial Hall, a long detached iron building, was situated in the west end of Kimberley, that part of the town, unlike most English cities, being the reverse of fashionable.

It was half-past nine when Senior and Searight reached the hall. From the outside it seemed cold, desolate, and uninviting, the silver rays of the moon making the iron structure look like a whited sepulchre.

After knocking at the door, which was opened by a

coloured man, they were accosted by a very fat, bloated woman, almost black, sitting on a chair just inside the entrance.

"Five bob, please, gentlemen," the lady exclaimed as she held out her hand.

They paid the money and entered the hall. At the far end was a small stage with a vilely painted drop scene. Underneath the stage, in the place set apart for the orchestra, and facing outwards, was a band consisting of five men of various shades of colour.

Their musical instruments were two squeaking fiddles, two guitars, and a loud-toned concertina. The body of the hall was occupied by about thirty couples dancing a set of quadrilles. The ladies, like the bandsmen, were of all colours, from the delicate complexion of the Colonial girl to the coal-like black of the Zulu. There were but few white amongst them, and, with hardly one exception, all were ugly and coarse-looking. They were gaudily attired in ill-fitting dresses.

The men were a mixed lot. There were Cockneys of the same class that Senior had seen at the "Red Light." Many Colonial lads in tight-fitting trousers with bell-bottoms, short jackets, and hats on the back of their heads, inclining to one side; a sprinkling of mechanics, and a few men who, by their general style, laid claim to belong to the better class of Kimberley.

The Cockneys and Colonials danced with great vigour and spirit; the mechanics stepped it rather clumsily. The swells stood by with undisguised contempt expressed on their faces, but ogling and chaffing the girls when they had a chance. When advancing in the quadrilles the dancers would pirouette round several times, attending, apparently in serious manner, to the steps of their peculiar mode; and in the "ladies' chain" the men turned the women round twice under their arms, performing the difficult gymnastic feat of continuing to hold their hands as they did so. In the "setting to" of partners the lady would be suddenly seized by the gentleman, and together they would spin round with velocity of such duration that it seemed marvellous they did not drop down from giddiness. Whenever the air of a certain song was played, the band and all the dancers joined in the refrain, the words of which were, "Speak to me, Tommy,

talk to me, Tom; Where can I, Tommy, get the straight tip from?" The shrill cracked voices of the women were heard loud above those of the men.

On the right of the entrance was a bar, which no attempt had been made to ornament. A knot of men stood with their backs against it, some with half-emptied glasses in hand, watching the dancers.

A coloured man, not only possessing marked Jewish features, but also the Israelitish name of "Aarons," presided over the bar.

On the left side of the hall was another exit, round the door of which was a crowd of cabmen, mostly coloured, looking on appreciatingly, and waiting for fares. The band, though wretched from a musical point of view, kept splendid time, and the measured beat of the feet seemed, as it were, to harmonise with the "thrum, thrum" of the guitars. What with the bad ventilation and heat, the Prince Imperial Hall became almost unbearable to Senior, still the sight of this motley crew strangely interested him.

At length the quadrille ended, and some of the couples promenaded the hall, arm in arm, whilst others made a rush for the bar, where they were served by the dusky Aarons, assisted by one of those who had been dancing, the former all smiles at the briskness of trade.

The din was great: champagne corks were popping, men were, in loud tones, demanding drinks, chaffing the girls with brutal coarseness, and swearing as only low East-End Londoner can; women's tongues were incessantly wagging, manipulating bad English or low Cape Dutch, and sometimes a mixture of the two.

This was the Mabilie of Kimberley. Vice here, happily, did not appear in alluring garbs, for, in spite of the demand for licentiousness which was generated by the feverish, restless, gambling atmosphere of the Diamond Fields, and the extraordinary plenitude of money, none but the most thoroughly depraved of womankind could be induced to accept a life of sin where there were so many ways of earning an honest living.

A slightly off-coloured, short, stout woman, with thick neck, round bullet head, and heavy under-shot jaw, which gave her a strong resemblance to a bull-dog, came up to Seairight and Senior. She addressed the latter in a hoarse

grating voice, and, trying to ogle him coquettishly, asked if he not going to dance! Senior, young and country bred, shuddered with a feeling of loathing and disgust. He abruptly said "Come on" to Searight, whom, catching by the arm, he dragged away out of the hall into the street.

CHAPTER V.

SEARIGHT, when outside the hall, laughed heartily and chaffed the other about his "sweet young innocence." They then went the rounds. Searight knew the ropes, as he called it. Several gambling resorts, generally in the back rooms of the public-houses, were visited.

Those places seemed open all night. They had only to go through the yard, knock at a back door, and after satisfying a voice that always inquired "Who is there?" an entrance would be gained.

It appeared odd to Senior to see men who plainly showed that they had come from the lowest dregs of society, gambling for high stakes, flashing gold and notes in profusion, and drinking the most expensive of wines.

It was four in the morning before he found himself in his bedroom in the hotel after they had made what Searight termed "a night of it." Having with some difficulty taken off his clothes, he threw himself on the bed and soon dropped off to sleep.

He did not wake till nearly noon. He felt as if there were a lump of lead inside his head. Such dissipation as that of the previous night he was unused to. With a strong feeling of disgust at himself, he arose and sallied out in his pyjamas, towel in hand, in quest of the bathroom. He stayed underneath the cold shower for about fifteen minutes, and then went to bed again, his head still throbbing in spite of the sluicing. He remembered his engagement that evening with Mr. Stewart. What wretched form he would be in! What a fool he was to have taken so much whisky-and-soda! It was hard to understand why young fellows drank spirits at all. The taste of them was disagreeable, and the after-effects were far from pleasant, as he was now experiencing. How was

it that so many of the young fellows he had come across in Australia and South Africa, looked upon hard drinking as something to be admired? He puzzled his brain trying to discover the reason. Ah! he knew why he took it, and he felt ashamed of his weakness. He did not like liquor at all, but drank because he did not wish to appear different from others. A coloured waiter now came and knocked at the door, disturbing his meditations. Addressing his remarks in the third person, as African servants usually do: "Would Mr. Senior like anything sent up to his room? It is close on tiffin time and Mr. Senior has had nothing all the morning yet."

"Oh! no. Don't talk to me of food, it makes me ill to think of it."

"Will Mr. Senior have a brandy-and-soda?" the waiter asked, with a knowing look, being well experienced in the wants of those suffering from an overdose of alcohol, as he judged was the case with this young gentleman. But the bare mention of that mixture made Senior shudder. He was still young, and far removed from that stage arrived at by men accustomed to excess, when the "eye-opener" is indispensable.

"No! no!" he exclaimed. "But, look here, bring me a soda-and-milk. I am as dry as a wooden god," he added, making use of one of Dorsby's favourite expressions.

The soda-and-milk was brought, and Senior drained it in one long draught, giving a sigh of relief as he laid his head back on the pillows. He again went off to sleep, but remained dreamily conscious of an aching head. At three o'clock he got up and dressed, and, being anxious to get himself well for the evening's spar, he hired a horse at a livery stable and went for a ride.

For two hours he rode, arriving at the Du Toits Pan Club exactly at half-past six. Mr. Stewart complimented him on his punctuality.

"Well," he said, "I see you are up to time, exactly half-past to a tick; that is what I like, do you understand? I hate to be kept waiting."

After dinner they sat on the stoep. Senior refused a cigar on the grounds that it would affect his "wind," his condition, he said, being none of the best as it was. Mr. Stewart adroitly tried to draw him out; told him

what he thought were good and bad points in boxers and boxing, and asked the other's opinion of the same. Senior gave careful answers, wishing to impress the mine manager. "If his practice is as good as his theories, he'll do. I shouldn't wonder a bit if he has not a good head for fighting," thought Mr. Stewart.

A few minutes after eight a tall, wiry-looking man mounted the stoep.

"Ah! here he is; this is a gentleman whom I have got to give you a bit of a spar. Mr. Senior, Mr. Tinlin," said Mr. Stewart, as Senior recognised by the rays of the flickering lamp above the entrance of the club, Tinlin, the notorious billiard sharp.

"I think we have met before," the sharp said, as a patronising grin divided his lips and exposed two rows of teeth, pearly white and regular.

Senior said, "Oh, yes! I remember."

"In Cape Town?" inquired Mr. Stewart anxiously.

"No; just the other day, heah," replied Tinlin.

"Well, if you are ready we'll go downstairs. Willie Bole has cleared the store-room out for us—there are only a few bags of chaff and mealies. I think there will be plenty of room," and Mr. Stewart conducted the others downstairs. The room was about twenty feet long by eighteen feet wide. At both ends were bags of mealies piled one above the other, and close to these on the floor were a few bags of chaff. The place was lighted by three candles stuck in bottles in different parts round the room. The boxing-gloves were there in readiness, lying on a bag of chaff.

Mr. Stewart, drawing Tinlin to one side, whispered to him his instructions. "Now, do you see, I'll just tell you what I want you to do. We must kid the boy it is going to be only a light, friendly spar, don't you understand? Well, after you have been at it a while, you must look out for a good chance, and go for him as hard as you can, and try and knock him out. Give it to him; do you understand? Don't spare him. I want you, do you see, to knock lumps off him. I have my reasons for it. Now, don't ask any questions," he added, as the other was about to say something, "but do as I tell you."

Tinlin, who liked doing anything crooked, sniggered, and said "All right," the other could depend upon

him. He glanced with contempt at this boyish-looking opponent.

Mr. Stewart then went over to Senior. "Now, my young man, just go easy, you know; I just want to see how you shape. This man Tinlin is pretty good. Oh! yes, he's no' bad. The worst of him, though, is, he sometimes loses his temper and starts slogging, don't you understand?" Here he looked hard at Senior, as he thought, The lad won't blame me now when Tinlin starts going for him. He doesn't care by his looks, seemingly, whether the other man loses his temper or not. "But if he does," Mr. Stewart went on, after a pause, "you will do all you know; knock him out, do you see, if he tries to take a liberty. I don't like, don't you understand, to see men lose their tempers, and when they do I like to see them taught a lesson, d'ye see, so don't forget. But, oh, I don't think Tinlin will—I don't think he will."

Senior eyed the sharper. He was a handsome, good-looking fellow, he owned to himself, as the other was talking to Mr. Stewart. His regular, well-cut features, shapely nose, and long black moustache gave him rather an aristocratic appearance. But his eyes and mouth bespoke volumes. In them one could read treachery and cruelty. He still affected the dress of the digger, and had a red silk sash round his waist. Senior could see plainly that Tinlin looked at him with sneering contempt. He felt a strange loathing for this man, as he would for a venomous reptile. Oh! how he would like to smash his evil, good-looking face. He could not understand how a man like Mr. Stewart, who professed to admire the "old style" so much, wanted them to box lightly. He was anxious to display his hitting powers, his true form, before the enthusiastic Scotchman, and he felt he could have done himself justice, too, with this well-bred thief. Senior had inherited from his mother, who was an Irish lady, all the combativeness characteristic of the Celtic race. From his father he had got his shyness and reticence, but, at the same time, the stay and backbone of the stolid Englishman. He yearned to hurt this man.

Tinlin instinctively recognised in the youngster an enemy. The plain rugged face had a look of truthfulness that

angered him as a red mantle would a bull. He also longed for the fray.

As Senior, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, was putting on the gloves, Mr. Stewart cried out, "Stop! take off your shirt, man! I want to see—" and then he muttered something indistinctly. The young fellow obeyed with alacrity, knowing that he stripped remarkably well, glad of the opportunity of showing his figure. Mr. Stewart, as he cast his eyes on Senior's beautifully proportioned chest, shoulders, and arms, well covered with elastic muscles, was for a moment struck with admiration and astonishment. He had not thought it possible that this boy could have such marvellous physique. In his clothes he looked a pigmy to what he did when stripped. The mine manager scanned him closely, and the young athlete felt proud when he saw his admiring glances. He, almost unconsciously, threw out his chest. Mr. Stewart thought what fun it would be if, when Tinlin tried to knock this lad out, he got knocked out himself. He could see that the "sharp" thought little of him. The idea tickled him. He burst out laughing and continued until the tears came into his eyes.

"What the devil are you laughing at?" asked Tinlin wonderingly.

"Man!" said the other, puzzled for an answer, "I'm laughing, do you see—" and the rest of his words he allowed to be swallowed up in a fresh burst of merriment.

Tinlin commenced to laugh too, thinking that it was the sudden surprise in store for the young Englishman that was amusing the Scotchman.

Senior, who was inclined to be sensitive, felt uneasy. He blushed as he thought that probably the cause of their mirth was his trying to "chuck" a chest.

"Never mind me," broke in Mr. Stewart, "I am, I think, getting auld and silly. You know when this lad stripped it brought to my mind a funny thing that happened, don't ye understand? Tom Sayers and Tom Paddock—but I'll tell you afterwards," he concluded, not being able to invent anything sufficiently funny to account for his sudden merriment.

It was then arranged that they were to box three two minute rounds. That was quite long enough for him, Tinlin asserted. What with drinking all day and

"shpieling" all night he could not expect his condition to be anything but the reverse of good. He thought, however, to himself that one round would probably be more than enough for his antagonist.

Mr. Stewart held an open watch in his hand, and, upon being answered in the affirmative as to the readiness of both, he called "Time" in a serious impressive tone. After going through the usual formality of shaking hands the spar began.

Senior's attitude looked grace itself. His spell of teaching in Cape Town had put a sort of professional polish on his style. His arms moved in and out smoothly and easily. He stood lightly but firmly poised, the weight of his body being equally divided on both legs, ready for attack or defence. The head was held slightly to the right, with the chin lowered.

Mr. Stewart was much pleased so far, and already schemes began to form in his mind of cleverly ringing in this dark horse in the near future. Tinlin moved about in stealthy manner like a cat, appearing by his movements to be possessed of both power and quickness. They went in for light quick hitting with the left. Senior, being much the better boxer, scored the more hits. He proved himself also wonderfully nimble on his "pins."

Tinlin, already feeling nettled at the other's superiority at this style of boxing, was eager to commence in earnest. Senior, feeling rather disgusted at the tame kind of sparring they were indulging in, got somewhat careless. Mr. Stewart here gave a cough, and Tinlin looking round, the former nodded; then the "sharp" winked. Senior now tried to get in a left-hander, when he was countered so heavily on the nose that his eyes filled with water, and, before he knew what was up, Tinlin swung his right fair on the ear and then rained heavy blows on head and neck until Senior staggered nearly dazed.

"Time," loudly shouted Mr. Stewart, and Senior reeled on to a bag of chaff. His senses had almost left him. The attack, so cowardly yet so clever, took him completely by surprise.

Mr. Stewart walked over to him and whispered, "By heavens! Tinlin lost his temper again because you were getting the best of him. He nearly had you knocked out. It would have been quite if I had not called time, don't ye

understood? Oh! although it wanted half a minute of the two minutes, I wasn't going to see you taken a mean advantage of, do ye see? Oh, no. It was a liberty, a clean liberty, I'm telling ye. But you did very well; you box very nicely indeed, very nice. Now take off the gloves, my lad; you see you are a bit dazed, you can't go on the now. But you wait for Mr. Tinlin. You watch for an opportunity to pay him back. Oh! he is a mean skunk." Mr. Stewart, who was simply trying to test the young man's pluck, waited eagerly for an answer.

Senior, with eyes fixed on the sharper, who had an amused sneer on his lips, hissed out, "I'll see you damned first, let us fight the three rounds out."

Mr. Stewart noted with gladness the fierce light in his eyes. This shy, modest lad had a lot of that quality which the "fancy" termed "devil" slumbering in his bosom, it only wanted rousing. If he could only hit, he never saw a lad who looked more cut out for a fighter. Now he would be able to see if he had a good head. A better opportunity of testing him could not have occurred. After crossing over to Tinlin, the Scotchman exclaimed in a low tone, "Splendid, man! I did not believe it was in ye. Very good, very good! Man, but you did it cleverly. Knock him right out this round, don't spare him. Do ye understand? Man, I want you to break his jaw."

Tinlin smiled, pleased with this praise from the man who was considered the best judge of fighting in the country. "All right," he returned, "depend upon me. I'll kill the young cub this time; but don't call time until I have got my wind. My condition is all to blazes."

"Time" was at length called. Mr. Stewart, old stager as he was, felt faint from sheer excitement. How would this young chap behave? he wondered.

Senior went up with a burning desire to literally kill this cowardly thief. The venom he felt gave him cunning. He would not throw away a chance, he would make sure of his victim.

Tinlin, after feinting twice to draw the other, made a wild rush at him, when Senior cleverly slipped him, and Tinlin, from his own impetuosity, fell against the pile of bags of mealies. Mr. Stewart did not feel quite satisfied; he hoped that Senior was not funkling. But the latter was biding his time; his brain was still suffering

from the effects of the heavy blows received in the first round.

Tinlin then sparred up again, thinking that, as the other made no attempt at attack, he was cowed. He smiled confidently as he pulled himself together to try and knock the youngster out.

Mr. Stewart looked very serious as he moved his arms and head in unconscious imitation of the boxers. His mouth twitched from side to side. He felt impatient. Senior still calmly waited his opponent's attack. Tinlin, drawing near, feinted; but the other taking no notice, the sharp made a sudden spring with the intention of using left and right, and ending the affair; he was met with a straight "left-hander," such a blow that he saw myriads of stars. Now came the young Englishman's turn. He struck out with cruel force, left and right, till Tinlin reeled again with his wits all abroad; he did not even have sufficient sense left to fall to escape punishment.

"That will do! that's enough now!" screamed Mr. Stewart, and he rushed forward and tried to seize hold of Senior, being frightened by the murderous, demoniacal expression that grievous harm might come to the other. Senior placed both hands on the old Scotchman's chest and with a vigorous push sent him sprawling on the floor. He then calmly drew near to his reeling opponent, who was now like a man in a helpless state of intoxication, and hit him a tremendous smash with his left, breaking his nose, which gave a "clicking" sound, and then with terrific force bringing the right round on the jaw. Down dropped Tinlin senseless, all of a heap, like a man shot through the heart. Mr. Stewart still remained on the floor in a sitting posture, resting on his hands, gazing with pale anxious face at the spectacle before him. Tinlin was lying motionless. In falling his head had reached the floor first, and his body had given a snake-like writhe, twisting the neck as if it were broken.

Senior stood over his prostrate foe like an infuriated gladiator who hungrily waited for the sign to stab his antagonist to the heart and culminate his triumph.

Mr. Stewart feared that his little scheme to test the young fellow's devil and pluck had worked only too well. He made sure that Tinlin was a dead man.

CHAPTER VI.

Six months went by. Senior was now an overseer in the employment of the Violet Diamond Company. Twelve Kaffirs were under his charge on the depositing floors whither the blue ground* is carted and spread out, preparatory to being put through the washing machinery. On the floors it is wetted, and left to dry and crumble under atmospheric influences, to which end it is aided by Kaffir labourers, called "boys," who with picks break up the larger lumps.

It was the month of October. How wearisome were the man's duties! From sunrise to sunset he had to stand or sit under the burning glare of the sun, which, being reflected by the powdered diamondiferous soil, made his eyes ache. There was nothing to distract the attention. Even his meals, sent from the Carnarvon Hotel, where he boarded, he had to eat while watching.

Senior had now become well experienced in the tricks of the wily African. Every dodge had been tried on him in the concealing of stolen diamonds with varying success. The adroitness of the niggers was marvellous. All parts of the body they used for this purpose—ears, nose, stomach, hair—and they even made cuts in their legs to hide the precious stones. Sometimes a Kaffir, on coming across a diamond too large to swallow or conceal on his body, would cover it up, mark the spot carefully, and come back for it after dark. Senior, although new to the business, was quickly spotted as a cute "baas." His eyes were keen, and it did not take him long to become acquainted with all their little manoeuvres.

It was Saturday. Senior's mind began to wander. They "knocked off" work on this day at two o'clock. What could he do to-morrow, Sunday? he thought. Should he hire a horse and ride to Alexanderfontein, the regular holiday resort, whose attractions lay in the possession of a few trees, some patches of grass, a swimming bath, a bowling alley, and, of course, a bar? He decided upon a long walk instead. It would cost him £1 for the horse, and he was taking a pleasure in seeing how much he could

* Name given to the diamondiferous soil, which is of a dark greyish-blue colour.

save out of his wages : £5 a week, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent commission on stones found by himself, or boys under his charge whilst at work. He had £60 when he started on his present duties, and now, through economy in saving, he had the very respectable sum of £160 to his credit at the Cape of Good Hope Bank. Thinking of this, he began to build castles in the air. Before long he would have enough to make a good investment in diamond companies. He would ask Mr. Stewart to advise him in this, as he was a knowing, canny Scot. With the bright hope of youth he made certain that all his ventures would turn out successfully. In a few years, with ordinary luck, he would be quite wealthy. Was there not Denny Harrington, an old Irish miner, reputed to be worth over £100,000? And there was certainly nothing clever about him; he could not even read. This lucky Hibernian had arrived on the fields penniless. There were many others also who had come to Kimberley poor, and were now rich.

As soon as he had made enough money to live in comfort, with a bit to spare, he should not trouble to make any more, but retire from work. Life was but short; they had all to die sometime, so the best way was to work hard until sufficient money was made to enjoy the remaining years. A little fortune acquired, he would roam all over the world; there was no pleasure like travelling.

He pictured himself with a companion who would share all his thoughts. Neither Dorsby nor Searight would do. He wondered how much longer the former would last in Kimberley. Searight had got a billet as collector for Dr. Crowlet, with a salary of £15 per month and commission. But, like his employer, he was given to gambling. Searight was unreliable, and might be fool enough to play with money that did not belong to him. Senior, however, hoped he would not.

Then his mind went to Tinlin, Mr. Stewart, and that dramatic scene enacted six months before in the Du Toits Pan Club. He dwelt with some degree of satisfaction on the sensational boxing contest. His repugnance to the sharp was somewhat softened by thoughts of the latter's broken nose, that had for ever spoilt his good looks. The ugly kink had increased the evil look of his face. Mr. Stewart, Senior was inclined to believe, had got up the whole thing just to have some fun at the expense of both.

He laughed as he thought of the clever way in which the old Scotchman had managed it. But to this encounter he probably owed his present situation.

Suddenly Senior's meditations were disturbed by his becoming conscious that one of the boys in his gang was looking stealthily at him. His suspicions aroused, he pretended to gaze vacantly beyond the Kaffir who whispered something to the next boy. Senior then noticed that word seemed to be passed along to the two who were farthest behind, and that these suddenly broke out into an angry altercation which soon led to blows. This might only be a scheme to distract, thought Senior, and the boy who had at first glanced at him in a secret manner had probably discovered a diamond. He walked toward the quarrelling Kaffirs, but just as he passed the one whom he suspected, he looked round suddenly and saw him quickly pick up a rough stone and put it in his mouth. The two, who were to all appearances going for one another with words and blows, desisted when Senior came up to them. He wondered what course to pursue in dealing with the thief. He had seen, only three months before, a Kaffir literally flogged to death for stealing a diamond—diggers, mine-managers, and shareholders regarding this crime as almost as bad as murder. All the biggest and best stones were lost to them by the Kaffirs' thieving, which often meant ruin to both private diggers and companies. The cruel death of this boy had haunted Senior. He felt ashamed when he realised that he had stood by and had not interfered, although he had no idea that the boy would die. As yet he had not imbibed the very strong prejudices entertained by the old colonists and colonials against the black races. To his mind the Kaffir had been most cruelly murdered. The theft of diamonds was certainly iniquitous. It was clearly his duty as an employé of the company to hand the present robber over to be punished; but what might the consequences be? He might have the blood of the wretch on his head. No, he would use his own discretion in dealing with this case. He called a boy named Sixpence, a Zulu, who had been in the service of an English family in Natal, and was the only one of the gang that could speak English. Senior told him that he wanted to talk to them all. They all drew near to hearken, wondering what the baas had to say. Senior did his best

to explain to them, through Sixpence, as simply as he could, the great harm thieving diamonds did to the white men, their wives and children, and that in time such theft would also injure the black men. "If the white men did not find enough diamonds to make the mine pay, then the mines would have to be closed, and no Kaffirs would be any longer required. Do they understand what I say?" asked Senior of the interpreter.

"Yes, baas."

"What do they say to it, then?"

"They say, yes, the baas is right."

Then Senior went on to tell them about the Kaffir he had seen flogged to death for stealing a "klip" (as the Dutch and many of the Kaffirs call a diamond), and how sorry he had felt for the boy, who was not so much deserving of the flogging as the bad white men that taught and encouraged them to steal by promising to buy their stolen stones.

"What do they say to that?" Senior asked.

"They say, yes; the baas is a wise baas, he speaks true," replied Sixpence.

"And now, Sixpence," Senior continued, "I saw a boy to-day pick up a 'klip,' and he did not give it to the baas. I don't want to see any of my boys beaten with a big sjambok until he is dead, so this boy must give me the 'klip' and I won't tell the big baas this time. But he must hold up his fingers and swear that he won't try and steal any more. Now, ask the boy who has the 'klip' to give it up to me."

Sixpence addressed the boys, but the one who had the stone in his mouth made no sign of response.

"Well, I will pick out the boy, and hand him over to the big baas to get sjamboked."

Still the thief stood motionless.

Senior then pounced upon the guilty Kaffir, who at once made an attempt to swallow the diamond, but sticking half way it caused him to cough, when out it flew—a large one—on the ground.

Senior immediately picked it up.

"Sixpence, ask him why he tried to cheat me."

The Zulu addressed the boy, who now looked very shamefaced, as he seemed to expostulate, gesticulating earnestly the while.

"He says," said Sixpence, after the Kaffir had finished, "that the baas is a very good baas, and a very clever baas too. He think, he say, that the baas not see him pick up the klip, as two boys fight when he find the klip, and the baas go to stop them. He think the baas want to find out if any boy pick up a klip, and so the baas say he *see* a boy pick up a klip. And if the baas find out, he would get the sjambok all the same, so he say nothing."

"Tell him, then," said Senior, who was somewhat satisfied with this explanation—"tell him that he must hold up his fingers, and swear never to steal again."

Sixpence told the delinquent what the baas wanted him to do, and then interpreted what the boy said. "He says the baas is a very good baas, and he thank the baas because he does not get the sjambok, and he will swear that he won't take away any klips as long as he works for the baas."

"Ah! but tell him he must swear not to take any at all when he is working for any other baas."

This, however, the Kaffir would not do, and Senior had perforce to be satisfied when the boy held up his right arm with the forefinger and second finger extended, and swore in Kaffir that he would abstain from theft as long as he worked for Baas Senior. The boys then returned to work.

At "knock-off time" Senior and his gang of Kaffirs went to receive their week's wages.

Mr. Stewart's house was close to the washing machinery, the hauling engine, and the blacksmith's shop. It was a small iron house with only two rooms, and there was in front a little flower plot, fenced in by a wooden paling.

On Saturday afternoons Mr. Stewart sat at a table placed outside near the front door. Little piles of sovereigns would be on the table, quickly disappearing, however, as the boys and other workmen came to be paid. When the rest had gone, Senior, without a word, and with pleasing thoughts of kudos and commission, placed on the table the diamond he had taken from the Kaffir.

"By heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Stewart, "where did you get that fine stone? Did you get it on the floors? Yes? Well, you are lucky in finding it. It is a wonder, indeed,

one of your Kaffirs did not get a hold of it without you seeing. Did you pick it up yourself, or did you catch a Kaffir with it?" (Here Mr. Stewart put the precious stone in his mouth.)

"I picked it up," Senior replied, feeling doubly uncomfortable at the equivocation, and at seeing Mr. Stewart putting the diamond in his mouth after the Kaffir had done so.

The manager re-produced the stone, all glistening with saliva, and, putting on his glasses, carefully examined it. "Man, do you know it has not a single flaw, and is over sixty carats? Come in the house and I'll weigh it."

In the house he got out a tiny pair of scales for the purpose, weighed the stone, and found it to be sixty-three and a quarter carats. "I told you!" he said. "Ah, I'm a good judge, I tell you. D'ye know what this is worth?" he asked as he held it up between his forefinger and thumb, and looked at the other.

"No." Senior had no idea.

"Well, I'll tell you. It will be close on to £460."

Senior then tried to work out what his commission would be, but the odd half per cent. rather confused him.

After a little talk about the diamond, Mr. Stewart said, "Oh, by-the-by, I want to have a wee chat with you to-night, I have something to say to you. Do you understand? Come up here to my place after dinner, will you? Now don't forget."

Senior promised, and then took his departure. As he walked home he felt in a pleasant mood, occasioned by the prospect of a good commission, which would materially add to his little banking account, the remembrance of his humanity to the Kaffir, and his success as an overseer. He lived in a small iron shanty containing two tiny rooms, separated by a canvas partition, opposite the Carnarvon Hotel.

In the evening he went, as requested, to Mr. Stewart's.

After some further talk about the diamond found on the floors, and also illicit diamond-buyers, Mr. Stewart asked Senior if he had seen that day's *Independent*. "No? Well, man, I can't help laughing, really, but I'll get the paper. Here it is. Read that."

Senior read aloud from where Mr. Stewart had pointed to with his thumb:—

“CHALLENGE.

“I, the undersigned, hereby offer to fight any man, bar Joe the Brum, in Griqualand West or the Cape Colony, with fists or gloves. Any size or weight.

“DOOLEY, of Liverpool.”

Senior, after reading it, looked at the manager wonderingly.

“Now this man, Dooley,” the latter broke in, “do you know him? No! Well, he is a big lump of a fellow, thick-set, with a great big head on him; looks a terrible man, I tell you; but he is no good. He fought ‘Sugar Goodson,’ some years ago, close to London; licked him, too, but Goodson had only one eye, d’ye see? He has beaten one or two here, but, man, he can’t shape at all, knows nothing—if I tell you—knows nothing! This is how he goes,” and Mr. Stewart put himself in boxing attitude, and caricatured Dooley’s style, and then burst into a hearty fit of laughter, and putting his right hand on Senior’s shoulder, and bringing his face close, exclaimed, laughing the while, “He is not a bit of good. He can’t fight a little bit, I am telling you, d’ye see? You understand me.”

Senior was puzzled why Mr. Stewart should be so amused at the poor fighting abilities of Dooley.

The old man went on, “I was pleased, I tell you, when you knocked out that blackguard of a fellow, Tinlin. I thought, you know, that you were too quiet, that you had no ‘vril’ I call it—‘devil,’ you know—so I told him, I told him, d’ye see, to knock you out. Thinks I, that will give him the needle if anything will, and you did get it too, properly. By Goad! I thought you had killed him. I’ll never forget it as long as I live.”

The old Scotchman here broke into a fresh peal of merriment, and, though he kept on talking, the overseer could not distinguish a single word, so convulsed was Mr. Stewart with laughter. At length, when his mirth had somewhat subsided, he sat down, and pouring some whisky and water into a tumbler, drank it off. Senior, on being asked, refused to partake of the same refreshment. “Man!” Mr. Stewart went on, “now, you would make a fine fighter,

a splendid fighter, don't ye understand? The first time I saw you, says I to myself, now that is the likeliest looking lad I ever saw. Man, I took quite a fancy to you. Poor Tinlin's fine shaped nose. I can't help laughing still when I think of you. Eh, you hit hard, and with both hands, too. You are a two-handed fighter, I tell ye." He brought out this last remark as if the other had contradicted him. "I would like to see Dooley just try to stand up to you three rounds—just three rounds, don't ye understand. Nothing would please me more, and you could lick not only this Dooley easy, but also the man he bars, 'Joe the Brum.'" Another burst of laughter followed this statement. "This Joe the Brum is a great big lout, an Africander; never been to the old country in his life. His father came from Birmingham, that is why he calls himself a 'Brum.' He has not got any science, do ye see, but he is a rusher, a regular rough-and-tumble fighter, hits pretty hard—oh, yes, hits pretty hard—with the right, but his left is useless, quite useless. He has beaten three men on these fields—none of them any good, you know, none at all. Man! there isn't a man in the country got any idea of fighting, bar you and myself. Do you know your best point? 'Tis not your hard hitting, do ye understand, though you do hit terribly hard. No, it is your quickness on your pins. I do like to see a man good in getting about. That was Tom Sayers' best point—good on his feet, d'ye see, good on his feet."

Mr. Stewart here made a pause, and looked keenly at the other to try to discover what effect his words were producing.

Senior felt pleased at the other's flattering opinion of his pugilistic powers, but was still mystified, not knowing what the old man was driving at.

"Now, I'll tell you the truth, I have taken a great fancy to you. Nice quiet gentlemanly young fellow, no talk—no gas, do ye understand? Now I would like to do you a good turn. I would like to put you in the way of doing yourself a bit of good. Now do ye know that we are going to have a very bad time shortly, a very bad time? I am telling ye. We are entering in upon the reaction after all the wild speculating that has taken place—the scrip mania: the floating of worthless companies. The banks, too, got drawn in with the gambling fever, and they have

advanced no end of money on valueless scrip. Now they are starting to call in their overdrafts with a vengeance, before it is too late, being more than satisfied with the first loss. Now is the time we will see who's who! The shoe is commencing to pinch nearly everybody. We will witness the biggest smash ever South Africa has seen—a smash that will be felt all over the country. Every merchant in the colony has been dabbling in diamond shares. More than half the companies that are now working will be stopped in a few months; when that is gone they are gone. This very company, the Violet—for God's sake don't say a word! I know I can trust you"—and then looking round mysteriously as if to assure himself that they were alone, he dropped his voice to a whisper—"we are now losing at the rate of £500 a month, and in a very short time the cash will be done, and I, as well as you, will have to look out for something else. I'm sorry to say so, but it's the truth. Oh, yes, nothing but the truth. Now I have been thinking of you. For myself, you know, I'm a Scotchman, I always keep a shot in the locker, don't ye understand? Now, do you see, I have discovered a way where you can—well, anyway, make over £1,000 for yourself, and make it in a few hours, too." Mr. Stewart stopped again and looked at Senior as if inviting inquiry.

"Oh, thanks very much, Mr. Stewart," said Senior. "It is awfully kind of you to think of me at all. How can I? What way is there? How is this £1,000 to be made so easily?"

"How is it to be made so easily? How is it to be made? Why, now, I'll just tell ye. You saw Dooley's challenge in the paper. Well, this is what you must do; just listen to me for a moment. You must offer to bet him as much as you think he can raise that he won't knock you out in, say, six three-minute rounds, don't ye see?" Mr. Stewart here again gave one of his hearty laughs. "If he takes you up, well, of course, you will stay the time; but let him get all the best of it; and then challenge him to fight you to a finish, and ask him to lay the odds, three hundred to two hundred; anyway, make the best match you can. Then, if the fight comes off, make it a long battle, and don't knock him about too much; and then, after you have fought something over an hour, 'out' him with

a right on the 'point' if you can manage it. You see, then his backers may think it is a chance blow, and perhaps match him against you once more. If they do, the same thing again. You can do it every time for a certainty, if you only keep your head. Then, after you have finished with Dooley, there is Joe the Brum. They'll lay any amount of odds on his beating you, as you could lick the other in less than half-an-hour, when it will take you, say, close on two hours to finish Dooley. By Goad! if you work it well, you'll be able to make a small fortune out of the two of them, don't ye understand?" Here Mr. Stewart, by compressing his lips in pouting fashion, and squeezing the air out between them, produced a sound resembling the tearing of cloth. "I'll find you your stakes, and there is one thing you may depend upon: you'll get all the winning money to yourself."

The mine manager helped himself to another whisky, and drank it off.

Senior felt quite confused and puzzled. He did not know what to say. The idea of engaging in a regular pugilistic encounter had never occurred to him. The word prize-fighting had to him a low significance, a term which called up in his imagination the lowest type of man, a man with scarred face, broken nose, and ill-shaped ears. A man who fought for money, and tried to reduce the face of a fellow-creature to a pulp for the sake of gain, was to him a brute indeed! He shuddered that anyone should propose to him to descend to this.

"Oh, Mr. Stewart!" he said, "surely you do not advise me to become a prize-fighter? You can't be in earnest? You couldn't. Really, you know—no—I could never think of fighting for money!"

"Why not?" asked the other.

Then Senior gave forth his views regarding prize-fighting. It was a brutal thing altogether, he thought.

Mr. Stewart's greatest delight in life was ringing in "dark horses" in all branches of sport, but especially in pugilistic matches. He would take the greatest pains in hatching a clever scheme, not for the sake of monetary gain, but just for the pleasure of effecting a grand surprise. Ever since Senior had boxed the billiard-sharper the mine-manager had set his heart on getting up fistic encounters between him and the local bruisers who were "fancied."

He had been plotting and planning to find out the best way to bring this about. With a nice quiet lad like this, on whose silence he could depend, he could work with safety any little plant. Tinlin was safe; for his own sake that man would not mention his defeat; indeed, the sharper had been promised if Mr. Stewart got "anything on," that he should stand "in a bit." How often had Mr. Stewart not wished for just such a one as Senior to turn up on the Diamond Fields, to show some of the fools who fancied they knew all about fighting how little they really did know! He had never anticipated coming across such a treasure as this overseer of his promised to be. He looked forward to the intense delight he should have in working out his schemes of surprise. It was through his artfulness that Dooley had been persuaded to put in that challenge in the *Independent*. Mr. Stewart had paid for the advertisement himself. The Scotchman had anticipated reluctance on Senior's part, but it was, he thought, only a matter of time. With skilful argument the lad's scruples would probably be overcome. He had even looked forward to accomplishing this; it was all part of the scheme he had taken in hand. In the discussion which now followed Mr. Stewart was eager and animated. With the thumb of the left hand stuck in the armhole of his waistcoat, to give emphasis to his various contentions, he shook the forefinger of the other in Senior's face as regularly as a pendulum.

They argued about the matter for an hour. Mr. Stewart concluding with saying, "Do you mean to tell me that such sports as chasing a wee fox, or a poor hare, until it is nearly dead from fright and exhaustion; that shooting tame, domesticated pigeons out of a trap, some of them flying away with the shot in them, only to die a lingering death; that horse-racing, when sometimes a beast is completely run out, and the jockey cuts pieces out of it with a whip—do you mean to tell me that these things, which are patronised by all the leading men of the nation, nobility, and statesmen, are not more cruel, more brutal, don't ye understand, than two men having a friendly bit o' fight? There you see the men of their own free will, voluntarily, I tell ye, agreeing to see which is the better in the science of boxing. They have perhaps the pluck, too, to back themselves with a bit of money, do ye see,

just the same as men playing billiards or whist would do. You see two men fighting," here Mr. Stewart put himself in boxing attitude; "one hits the other on the nose. What does he do when he gets the crack? Does he lose his temper and rush in? No he does not, he smiles," here Mr. Stewart gave a sardonic grin in imitation of the imaginary pugilist. "And," he went on, "waits his chance, don't ye see? When a man falls down on one knee and his opponent is allowed in that case to hit him, does he do it?—mind you there are big stakes on the fight—but does he do it? No, in nine cases out of ten, he walks away from him, and lets him up on his feet, exercises forbearance, although he might win the battle by taking advantage of the other's position. Do ye mean to tell me that that does not have a good effect on the crowd looking on? Ah! I tell ye, when you see a man with his eyes bunged up, his arm broken perhaps, his wind and strength all gone, when you see him staggering up to the scratch"—Mr. Stewart now reeled like a drunken man—"staggering, I tell ye! won't give in, seconds want to throw up the sponge, but he won't allow them. No, although he is dazed and stupid with the blows he has got, he has still the instinct left to fight as long as he can stand, don't ye understand? D'ye mean to tell me, d'ye see, that such pluck as that—and which every good fighting man has—does not have a good moral effect on everyone that sees it? Does it not make men who have witnessed such courage try to emulate it when occasion arises? Ay, man, I'm telling ye!"

Senior was somewhat carried away by the other's enthusiasm.

"Yes," he said, "no doubt there is a great deal in what you say; but you must admit that there is very strong prejudice against that sort of thing. A man would lose all social status who went in for it. There are many things one might think there is no harm in, but then you have to give way to others. Why, my people! I don't know what they would not think if I were to do it. They would look upon a prize-fighter as something worse than a burglar, at least. For the sake of my relations alone, if there were no other reasons, I could never bring myself to fight for money."

Mr. Stewart felt somewhat disappointed; he had not

expected quite so much obstinacy, but of his eventual success he had no doubts. He had every confidence in his own diplomacy. Some other plan must be concocted whereby to convince this young Englishman of the grand opportunity he had of gaining money and fame, and that, too, in a most honourable way. Anyhow, he had probably entered the thin edge of the wedge, which would suffice for the present.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER six months passed. Mr. Stewart's prediction of the bad times that were in store for the Diamond Fields had been realised. Everything was now in a state of depression and stagnation. The good times caused by the scrip mania were a thing of the past. The banks were the means of first bursting the bubble. At last it dawned upon them that the scrip upon which they had advanced money so liberally was after all not so valuable, and they refused to lend any more on such security. Gradually but surely the mining stock came down. The decline was enormous. Numerous companies went into liquidation. Men who had been considered very wealthy were now penniless, and in many cases hopelessly in debt. The unemployed, discharged miners, overseers and mechanics, were to be seen loafing about the bars and street corners in hundreds. The Violet Diamond Company had been wound up three months, and Senior's airy structures had all tumbled to pieces. Dorsby had disappeared, leaving many creditors to mourn his absence.

Searight was also idle now, his gambling propensities having at length got him into trouble. Although infatuated with games of chance, he had had sense enough to refrain from playing with any member of the professional gambling element, so well represented in Kimberley. Only three weeks ago, on the first of the month (March), he, at the close of a busy day's collecting, had called at the "Red Light" to get an account of £50 owing Dr. Crowlet by Chorles. After getting a cheque for the

amount he went into the gambling room just to have a look at what was going on.

Tinlin and Faganstine were drawing a faro bank to three I.D.B.s. As the last-named were a knowing lot, the game was, as they termed it, "a square one." One was backing the deuce-ace, and seemingly enjoying a good stroke of luck, so much so that Searight was tempted to risk £5 on the same cards. But the luck changed at once, and the collector kept on with "just another fiver, the last one," until he had lost every penny he had in his possession, including £109 in gold and notes he had that day collected for his employer. He then wrote out a cheque for £25 on the Standard Bank, in which institution, however, he had never had any funds.

Tinlin refused to cash the cheque. "No, Charlie, my dear boy," said he, "it is totally against the rules and principles of our bank to cash cheques, don't you know. I know you are quite good enough for the money, but I never make any exception. Get Chorles to oblige you."

Searight replied, "By Jove, Tinlin, it is beastly hard lines on me. I have lost close on a couple of hundred, and you might give a fellow a show of winning back some of his money—or of losing a bit more."

"Can't, my dear boy. Can't really. Get one of your friends to cash the paper for you, and I will with pleasure give you all the show you want to get your 'oof' back again."

Searight then, grumbling and swearing, went out and sought for Senior, the latter being the only one he could think of from whom there was any chance of his borrowing money. When he found him he told a plausible tale.

"Look here," he said, "Jack, old boy, by Jove! I have got myself into rather a mess, and I want you, like a good fellow, to give me a hand to get out of it. I'll just tell you how it happened. You know, I went to collect £50 from Chorles at the 'Red Light,' that he has been owing the old doctor for some time. Well, he told me that he would let me have it in a minute or two, and he kept putting me off, and humbugging me, for a couple of hours; then he challenged me to toss him double or quits. I refused, but he kept on nagging at me, so that at last I lost my temper and said, 'All right, come on then'—I

was anxious to get away from the beastly hole. We tossed with the dice—Yankee grab, you know—and I lost the bally thing. Now, Jack, this is just how I stand: to-morrow when I hand in my accounts I shall be fifty short, and if old Crowlet finds out how it has gone I shall get the sack, and most likely into serious trouble as well. Now, you are the only friend I have here—the only one I can trust to keep the thing dark. All I want you to do is this—to lend me the fifty quid. I have some money owing me, and with that and my income I shall be able to pay you back, sure, at the end of the month.”

Senior felt vexed, and was reluctant to lend him the money. “Can’t you,” he said, “raise it somewhere else? You know I can’t get anything to do, and goodness knows when I shall. I can’t really afford it.”

Searight then pressed and pressed until at last the other gave way.

“Well,” Senior said, “when I was working I saved every penny I could, so as to be independent. You and Dorsby used to chaff me about my meanness, because I did not fool around bars, and spend money on fellows I did not care a hang about. Now, you have had a better income than I have had all along. Why the deuce did you not try and save something? Gambling, too, believe me, is only a fool’s game, unless you want to thieve at it like Tinlin and his class. You must be off your chump to go and play with another’s money. Look here, I’ll tell you what I shall do now; you can have the fifty pounds on condition that you promise two things—to pay me back, as you say, by the end of the month, and that you will knock off gambling for—say a year. I cannot do long without the money, so I must have it back shortly.”

“All right, it’s a bargain,” replied Searight; “I’ll take my oath, I’ll give you my word of honour as a gentleman that from this I will not gamble any more, and that I shall pay you back at latest by the end of the month.”

As soon as he got the £50 he went away, found out Tinlin and Faganstine, and demanded revenge, which they were not slow in granting. Senior’s £50 soon vanished.

The same night Dr. Crowlet heard at the Kimberley Club that his collector had lost in gambling nearly £1,500—the amount being, as usual in such cases, much exaggerated.

Early next morning the Doctor ascertained from his patients how much money had been collected. The cheques, happily, had all been made out to order; all the money that had been paid in cash, £109, was gone. He felt relieved to find the discrepancy so much less than he had anticipated. He took no other steps in the matter beyond discharging Searight; no doubt, being an inveterate gambler himself, he could sympathise with his collector.

Searight told Senior that though he had made good the £50, Dr. Crowlet, having got wind of the affair, had sacked him.

Senior soon, however, discovered the truth. He felt angry, both at the loss of his money, which he considered now inevitable, and the base deception Searight had practised. He told him plainly what he thought. Searight said nothing in retaliation, having no little respect for the duped friend on account of his knowledge of the science of fisticuffs.

Having left the Pan, Senior was now living in a cheap boarding house, the "Albion," in Pniel Road, overlooking the Kimberley Mine, and close to the Diamond Market. This establishment was run by a Mrs. Frilling, a middle-aged woman, of massive proportions, and hideously ugly. She had two enormous fangs protruding over her lower lip, like tusks of a bull-dog, the yellowness of which was made more conspicuous by the dazzling whiteness of her false front teeth. This lady was troubled with a growth of hair on upper lip and chin, the strength of which had been increased by her habit of shaving. Notwithstanding the non-attractiveness of this person, she was credited with possessing two admirers of the opposite sex, respectively named by the boarders the "old un" and the "young un." The former was an elderly man about fifty, and the other, curiously enough, a good-looking young fellow.

The "young un" made himself useful in shaving Mrs. Frilling, and in otherwise attending to her numerous little wants, for which he got his board and lodging free, and sometimes a little pocket money. The "old un" had, it was said, gained his share of the lady's affection by finding the necessary capital to start the boarding-house. Both evidently knew of the other's amorous attentions, but

were apparently satisfied to divide the charms of their joint mistress.

The boarders were mostly of the working class, with just a sprinkling of I.D.B. runners who, for various sums of money, carried stolen diamonds into the Free State, the border of which was quite close to Du Toits Pan—running the gauntlet past the patrols of police, who were always on the watch for them. There were only two lady-boarders, a Miss Mulroy, a fat Irish girl, who was a barmaid out of an engagement, and a Mrs. Mirers, a dark gipsy-looking woman of about thirty, possessing a well-featured, but evil, sensual face. The latter was reputed to be one of the, by no means few, women in Kimberley who, so degraded by the vitiating effects of the Diamond Fields' crime—I.D.B.—procured illicit diamonds from Kaffir-thieves by appealing to their lowest animal passions.

Senior's room was a front one, with the window looking into Pniel Road. The occupant before him had been an I.D.B., who, having been successfully trapped by a Kaffir sent by the detectives, was now doing seven years' penal servitude.

Shortly after his gambling misfortunes, Searight, being one evening homeless and penniless, turned up and begged Senior to give him a shake-down on the floor—just for the night, he said. He had, however, taken up his quarters there ever since; and, further, without asking permission, took his meals regularly at the "Albion," Senior having to pay for them.

Mr. Stewart had tried his best to persuade his late overseer to take advantage of the splendid opportunity offered of making "a nice wee bit of money" by taking down the numbers of both Dooley and Joe the Brum within the "magic circle." The old Scotchman had argued and pleaded, using all the sophistry he had at his command, but Senior was determined not to fight for money. He would be willing to box either of the pugilists for love, but for nothing else. At length, one night, Mr. Stewart, who had been talking most eloquently of the glories of the "manly art," without producing the slightest effect on the young man's decision, resorted to the last and only device he could think of—trying to goad the other into falling in with his plans by casting an aspersion on his courage. "Ah!" he said, "I can see what is the matter

with you. Do ye mean to tell me that it is on account of any principle in the matter, or any fear of shocking your relations? No, I know what it is, don't ye understand? It is neither one nor the other. I can see, my lad, through a stone wall just as far as most people. Oh, yes, I can that, do ye see. I have been suspecting it for a long time, but I did not like to own it even to myself." Then, bringing out the words very slowly and distinctly, he went on, "Ay—my—lad—you—won't—fight—because—do you understand—because—you—are—afraid, and nothing else."

Senior rose from his chair, took up his hat from the table, and went to the door; then, facing round, said very quietly, "Good-night, Mr. Stewart," and walked away from the mine-manager's house, leaving the other vexed and discomfited.

Senior felt indignant; then anger turned to sorrow. He had grown attached to the old Scotchman, who, partly through a fondness for him, and partly with the motive of the more easily getting him to fall in with his wishes, had been very kind to him.

"Cannot he understand why I don't wish to be a prize-fighter?" he asked himself. Mr. Stewart's unjust accusation sank deep into his heart.

One Sunday morning about six, when Senior was having his usual walk before breakfast, Searight, still asleep on the floor, was aroused by someone tapping at the window. He called out, "Who is there?"

A voice answered, "Baas, baas."

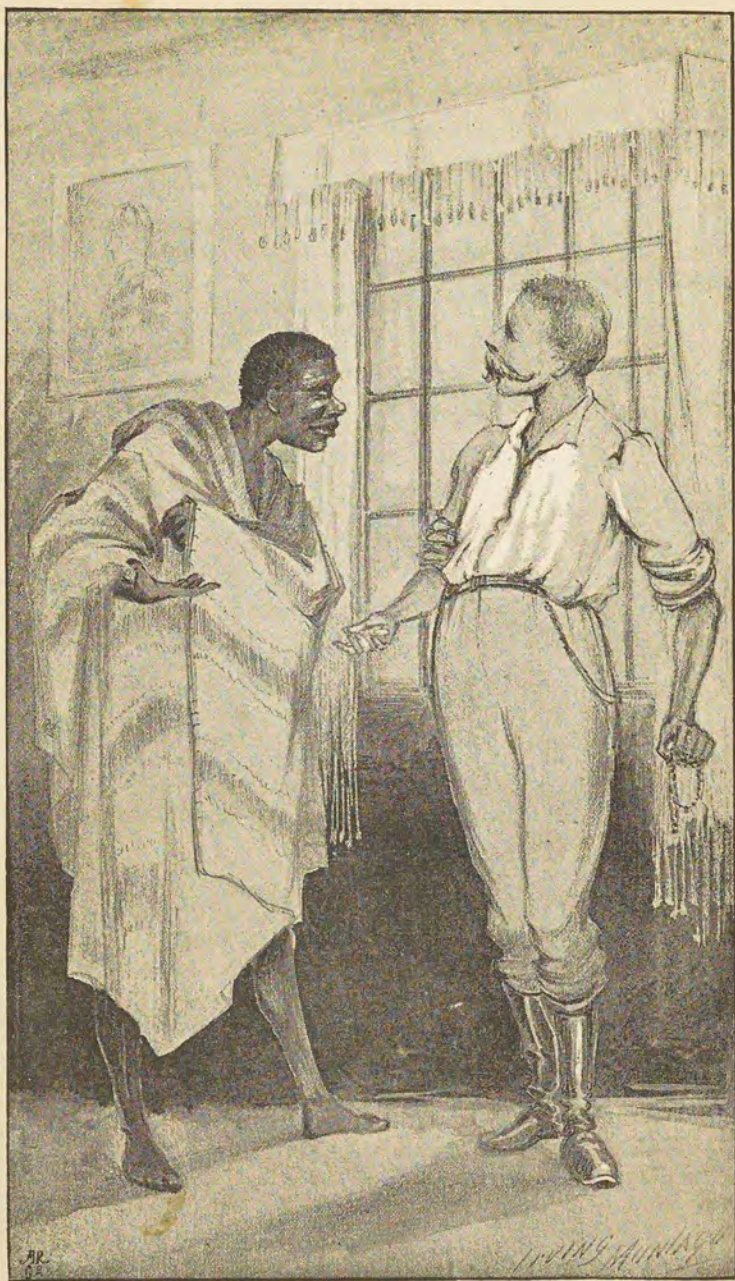
Searight jumped up and looked out of the window. Standing close into the wall of the house, he saw a Kaffir of dissipated looks, wearing a blanket that had once been white, but now was of a dark greyish colour. The native, upon seeing him, made signs that he was desirous of speaking. Curiosity being aroused by the secret and mysterious manner assumed by the Kaffir, Searight motioned him to come round to the front entrance, opened it, and then led the way to the bedroom.

When the door was closed, Searight asked, "What do you want?"

The boy said, "Mooi klip, baas,"* and then he looked at the white man inquiringly.

* "Fine stone, master."





He slid them out and held them towards the Kaffir.—Page 63

"Where?" asked Searight. Whereupon the Kaffir produced from underneath his blanket a fine large white diamond, holding it out in the hollow of his hand.

Searight's heart began to palpitate; the blood rushed to his head as he gazed at the precious stone.

He had heard much of the wholesale theft of diamonds by the Kaffirs from the claims; he had also heard of small fortunes being often made by I.D.B.s purchasing a single stone for a few pounds, worth sometimes thousands.

All his cupidity was now stirred. He longed to buy this diamond, which even his inexperienced eye could tell was a fine one. But he was aware of the many illicit almost daily trapped by Kaffirs sent by the detectives. Then he remembered that it was acknowledged by nearly all that it was only towards those who were known to be in *the trade*, as it was called, that this plan was adopted. He had never bought a diamond illicitly. This could not be an attempt to trap him. It would be perfectly safe to purchase this stone. He was confoundedly hard up, and if he did not buy it, someone else would, that was a certainty. But then he had no money. Had Senior any in the room, he wondered. He looked at the Kaffir and asked, "How much?"

Though the boy could not speak English he seemed to understand, as he held up his ten fingers to signify as many pounds.

Then Searight hunted through Senior's box, and, finding nothing there, searched the pockets of his friend's clothes, but there was not a shilling in any of them. Suddenly he caught sight of Senior's watch and chain, attached to which was a small gold sovereign purse, a present from Mr. Stewart. Trembling, he seized the lot. The purse felt heavy; he pressed the spring with his thumbnail, the lid flew open—it was full, and contained five sovereigns. He slid them out and held them towards the Kaffir.

The boy shook his head, and held up this time eight fingers.

Searight ejaculated an angry "No," and being afraid of Senior returning at any moment, he pointed to the door and said, "Umba." *

Then the boy, after saying something in Kaffir, handed the diamond to Searight, holding out his two hands close together, for the money; and, after receiving it, made

* "Go!"

signs to the other to look out^d to see if the coast was clear. Being assured that it was, he took his leave quickly and silently.

Searight stood staring at the diamond. Suddenly he grew faint with terror. After all it might be a trap-stone. His knees shook, his face became livid, a choking sensation caught his throat. He thought of rushing out and throwing it back into the mine from whence it had come. But fear prevented this; there might be a detective outside watching. He quickly put the stone into an ink-bottle which was nearly full of ink. He wondered why the Kaffir had come to this particular room to try to sell the diamond. An idea struck him. Most probably he had been in the habit of selling diamonds to the late occupant, and was not aware of the incarceration of the I.D.B. He grew more hopeful, and began to dress hurriedly, not even taking the trouble to wash; he must get away before Senior's return.

He corked up the ink-bottle containing the gem and put it into his pocket, then opened the front door and peeped out cautiously. No one was in sight, so off he ran, not slackening his pace until he got round the corner of the diamond market. He made the best of his way to the racecourse, which was about two miles distant; he wanted to think of the best way of finding a purchaser for the diamond. On arriving at the course he walked round it, and then extracting the diamond from the ink-bottle and putting it in his waistcoat pocket, he bent his steps towards Kimberley. It was ten o'clock when he reached the town, which was by then wide awake.

A new Diamond Trade Act had only lately been passed. One of its chief points was that it was unlawful for any person to have in his possession any rough or uncut diamond without being able legally to account for it. The maximum punishment of those convicted under this Act was fifteen years' penal servitude.

At this time the theft of diamonds and the illicit purchase of the same had assumed such gigantic proportions that it threatened to demolish the whole diamond industry. Great and renewed efforts were being made to stem the rapidly increasing crime. Daily in the streets suspected people were stopped and searched; houses, canteens, Kaffir eating-houses were frequently "rushed," and every nook and corner searched carefully; passengers leaving

by coach for the Colony were often subjected to a strict examination of the clothes they had on, and also of their luggage; even bishops and others of clerical degree were not exempted from this undignified treatment.

Searight, as he thought of all this, again got into a nervous state; his knees gave way under him, a cold perspiration broke out on his face, he felt terrified, expecting every moment that a detective would place his hand on his shoulder and request him to come along to be searched. How he wished in his abject fear that he had never bought the diamond!

Mechanically, when he came to the "Red Light" on his aimless way, he entered the bar. There were only a few inside; Faganstine was there. His eyes were more bloodshot than usual; he had been up all night gambling. Just the man Searight thought to advise him; the sharper was well known as an I.D.B. After wishing him "Good-morning," Searight said:

"Oh, I say, Faganstine, I want to speak to you about something particularly private, don't ye know. Can we go to some quiet spot where we sha'n't be interrupted?"

"Vell," said the other, "I can takes you to mine house. No von vill be dere, bar de missus, an' she don't count. But vat is de matter? If you vants any ooftish, vy I can't give em to you. Vi, bli' me! I plays a square game last night, an' I lose a 'ordered jimmies."*

"Money, no," said Searight, "but something I want to ask you about that is worth a lot of money," and winking knowingly he went on: "Here, let us get a cab and go to your show; what do you say?"

Faganstine nodded, and said:

"Vi, all riette."

Going outside they hailed a Cape cart. "My house at Newton," said Faganstine to the driver.

This place was a small iron cottage. Faganstine, seeing that the other did not offer to pay the cab fare, did so himself.

After knocking, the door was opened by a woman of medium height. She looked slovenly, and there was a peculiar scared and stupid look in her face.

* Sovereigns.

Faganstine immediately introduced Searight. "Dis is mine vife. Mine dear, dis is a particular vriend, Mr. — Eh? Vy, bli' me, if I don't forgets de name. Oh, Mr. Yones; yes, Mr. Yones."

Searight bowed politely.

"Ve want to talk a leetle beeshiness, zo if dere is any von dat wants to zee me I am outs, and don't make no mishtakes. Do you hear me?" he added authoritatively, as he looked at her with a scowl.

"Yes, dear," she replied timidly.

Faganstine led the way into a sitting-room, furnished most lavishly and gaudily, Searight noticed, as they seated themselves opposite one another at a huge mahogany table, on which were many cheap china ornaments. A light blue rep-covered suite showed up conspicuously in contrast to bright scarlet window curtains and the purple tablecloth. There were half-a-dozen bright and exceedingly badly painted landscapes hanging round the walls. Right above Faganstine, and looking most incongruous, was a large picture of a girl with an angelic face, her hands clasped, her eyes turned heavenward, apparently in prayer.

Faganstine leered at Searight, waiting for him to begin. The latter after complimenting the proprietor on his "devilish nicely-furnished room" began: "I say Faganstine, old man, do you know, a funny thing happened to me this morning."

"Yes? Vat vas dat now?"

"Well, I was having a walk in the direction of the racecourse, when I came across about thirty Kaffirs, evidently homeward bound, as they were rigged out in the usual style, bundles and guns and all that sort of thing, fully laden, don't ye know. Well, just as I came up to the one who was furthest behind, I saw something small and bright drop from under the blanket he was wearing, and when I arrived at the spot—well, what do you think it was?"

"I dunno; vat vas it?"

"A diamond, and a good sized one too."

"You don't mean dis; but vas it zo now?"

Searight produced the diamond and tossed it across to Faganstine, whereupon the latter quickly started up and exclaimed, "Oh! mine Gott! mine Gott! vat you do?"

Oh, bli' me ! Put de dem ting in your pocket. You vant to get us bot seven years in de tronk* ?”

He ran to the door, assured himself that it was locked, went to the window and looked out, then came and sat down again, and after wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, said, “My vord ! mit dat dem shtone you have yust made me tremble like de leaves on de trees in de breeze.” Then he added quietly, “Let me zee dis ting vat de nigger drops.”

Searight, who had been much alarmed at the other's pretended fear, and now felt re-assured, handed the diamond to him.

The latter spat upon it, and pulling out the cuff of the white shirt he wore, rested the stone upon it, and, turning it over and over, said, “Vell, it ain't a bad shtone, but it has a flaw in de centre, vich is a peety. It is vort a nice leetle bit of money, too.”

“Would you advise me to give it up to the Detective Department ?”

Faganstine winked, “Vy of course you must give him up—mit a hook ! You vant my advice ? Vell now you zell him for yourself. Vait now. I yust tell you vat I does for a good turn for you. I knows a bloke vat buys shtones. I tink he might give you twenty pundt for dat von. Now I vill run all de reesk, and give you fifteen ; dat is a fiver for mineself.”

Searight had a good share of cunning ; he knew that this man would offer him very much under the value of the diamond, even as an illicit one. He shook his head and smiled knowingly as he replied, “Look here, Faganstine, you must take me for a mug. The best thing you can do now is to buy it outright yourself. Give me £250 and you can have it ; there now, what do you say to that ?”

Of course, Faganstine expressed the greatest bewilderment at such an absurd price being asked ; but after a great deal of talking and bargaining Searight accepted £110. The card-sharper paid the money in five-pound notes.

After shaking hands with Searight, he put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and holding his head on one side as he shut one eye tightly, said : “An' now, my

* Cape-Dutch for prison.

vriend, if you picks up any more shtones vat de Kaffirs drops, you bring 'em to me, an' I zal give you de best price; but," here he poked Searight in the ribs and shifted his head over to the other side, and dropped his voice to a whisper, "you mus' be careful; dere is de dem breakvater vat shticks out in Capetown; you lookouts!"

Searight then hurried to the "Albion." He felt in high spirits as he walked along. All risk was now gone, and he felt quite rich.

Senior was in the room when the other arrived, looking crestfallen, evidently having discovered the loss of his five pounds. He stared at the Irishman suspiciously, and was just about to speak when Searight broke in: "Oh! by-the-by, Senior, a friend of mine was here this morning, and he wanted change for a fiver very badly. I took the liberty of taking the five quid out of your sovereign purse. Here is the fiver." And he threw a five-pound note towards the other, which dropped on the floor.

Senior picked it up. He wondered if this story were true. He was glad to get his money back. But had Searight been making use of it? Perhaps gambling, and this time successful.

Immediately Searight had breakfasted at the Central Hotel, he went and ordered a new suit of clothes.

Some days later, when Senior saw Searight passing the "Albion"—the latter now lived at the Central Hotel—with new hat, boots, and suit on, and carrying a swagger, silver-headed cane, he called him into his room. "He must have raised the wind somewhere," he thought; "perhaps the long-talked-of remittance has arrived at last, and I may as well try and get some of what he owes me."

"I say, Searight," he said, "I have been thinking about clearing out. I can't get anything to do here; I must try somewhere else. I want to ask you," here he looked painfully shy, "if you can pay the money you owe me?"

"Now, look here, Senior," the other replied, "you are like the rest of them; when you see a fellow with a new rig out once more, you conclude he has come into a fortune. Like the beastly cad of a tailor, Lewis, the other day, who, because I was good enough to pay him in advance for this suit, had the cheek, don't ye know, to

ask me if I could not pay him some of the little I already owed him! I soon put him in his place, and let him see the difference between a gentleman and a shopkeeper. No; I don't think it is quite right of you, Jack. If I lent a fellow money, I would trust to his being gentleman enough to pay it when he could." He assumed an injured air. "I got paid a tenner by a fellow who has been owing it for the last three months. If you want to try for a billet, you don't stand much of a chance unless you are decently dressed. You must know that yourself!"

CHAPTER VIII.

SEARIGHT, once more in a state of temporary affluence, carefully avoided Senior and his other creditors. Although the former might see that his Irish friend had, somehow or other, prospered, he had not the moral courage to ask again for the money owing to him after the rebuff he had met with on the last occasion.

Shortly after the purchase of the stolen diamond Searight had made himself notorious by taking up his quarters with a young person called May Leslie, who was well known on the Diamond Fields. This young woman had come out to South Africa four years before as a member of the "Aldolphus Comic Opera Troupe." Although at that time only fifteen years of age, she had shown no little ability, and had a pleasing sweet voice, which she used with wonderful taste and feeling.

Shortly after the arrival of the troupe at Kimberley, young May Leslie had voluntarily cut short her theatrical career. The offer of a situation as barmaid, with the liberal salary of £15 per month and all found, proved too strong an inducement for her to remain on the stage—in spite of the dreams that gleamed forth in her youthful mind of becoming a great star—at a salary that was not always paid. Besides, were there not the perquisites attached to the billet? Women, especially pretty ones, were then very scarce in Kimberley. Presents of jewellery, and other things acceptable to the female mind, she was

informed, and rightly, too, she would receive "galore." The proprietor of the troupe, who could ill afford to lose one of the cleverest and most attractive of his company, had no redress in the matter, as the girl was under age.

May Leslie was soon raised from a barmaid to the more elevated position of housekeeper to a young German bachelor of means, a diamond broker. On that young gentleman taking his departure for the Fatherland, about a year afterwards, she returned to the stage once more, joining a travelling dramatic company. Then she came back to Kimberley and took a bar of her own. But soon after, being tempted by a most munificent offer of a grand house, horses and carriages, and an almost unlimited supply of money, she left the bar and became the mistress of the richest and most prosperous I.D.B. in Kimberley, Ikey Mosetenstine.

May Leslie, now nineteen years of age, was of medium height, of slender and exceedingly graceful build. She had a well-shaped head, and a luxuriant crop of shining coal-black hair. Her complexion was of a dark olive tint, yet delicate and transparent. Her features were regular. She had large bright eyes, the blue of which contrasted strangely with the darkness of her hair, eyebrows, and complexion; her teeth also, perfect in shape, shone with a dazzling whiteness against the dark skin. The lines and expression of her face bespoke a curious mixture of passion and shrewd intelligence, of pathos and strength of character; and the somewhat thick rosy lips of her small pouting mouth gave her a faint suggestion of sensualism.

She was always dressed in plain black. From her childhood she had shown a strange fondness for jewellery, though curiously she wore but little. She was always buying some ornament, which, together with her numerous presents, she hoarded up, and like a miser brought forth in secret, to look at and feel with her light fingers.

Since her arrival on the Diamond Fields, May Leslie had been regarded as one who liked before everything else her share of the good things of the world; as a clever calculating woman, who always kept her eye on the main chance; one who looked upon men as an adjunct to existence, whose chief mission was to procure for women the necessities and pleasures of life. It therefore puzzled many of her acquaintance how she could

now be so inconsistent. It was hard, indeed, to understand how this selfish, worldly woman could throw over the rich, ugly Mosetenstine, for the poor, handsome Searight. May Leslie had constantly asserted that she never had—in fact, that she was incapable of—a fondness for any man. To Searight, therefore, was the honour due for having convinced her that hitherto she had not known herself.

They met first at a race-meeting in Kimberley. Accidentally they had sat next one another on the grand stand. Mosetenstine, as usual on such occasions, had left her all to herself, he being busily occupied in backing horses. Like most of the I.D.B.s, he was a great gambler, and horse-racing was his particular weakness; but notwithstanding the cunning and shrewdness for which he was noted in overcoming all the difficulties and obstacles that beset the path of the illicit diamond buyer, he was considered the biggest "flat" that ever backed a horse or played a card. Bookmakers, jockeys, and card-sharpers looked upon him as legitimate prey, and banded together to fleece him.

Searight had undoubtedly the knack of making himself agreeable to women. He adopted a soft, soothing, yet superior and patronising manner that seemed to please them. He had the Irishman's gift of the blarney, and knew almost by instinct how to flatter their vanity. Besides, he was really a fine, handsome, athletic-looking fellow, with good features and a soft, silky moustache.

May Leslie had at once attracted him, and after a few casual remarks about the day and the horses, he skilfully drew her into an easy conversation. A man of impulse, he felt fascinated, and put on his very best lady-killing manner. To let this woman know that he was a man of good breeding, he alluded casually to "my father the Bishop of Shalhooly," "my sister Lady O'Rourke," and "when I was in the service." He succeeded so well in pleasing that before Mosetenstine had come to hand her to her carriage, after the last race, May Leslie had decided that Searight was the nicest and best-looking man she had ever met; and at her expressed desire he came to see her at her house in Du Toits Pan Road, carefully calling when Mosetenstine was away.

The intimacy ripened quickly. It was not long after

their first meeting that, in spite of his poverty, she consented to cast in her lot with his.

Searight having hinted at not being very flush, and at his next remittance not being due for some little time, May Leslie, with her own money, furnished a modest little wooden cottage in Lennox Street, containing two rooms and a kitchen, with a small yard at the back fenced in with corrugated iron.

The taste she displayed in furniture was good, with just a slight tendency to floridness.

When all was in readiness for occupation, she packed up her things during the temporary absence of Ikey Mosetenstine one afternoon, and took up her abode with her new lover.

Ikey Mosetenstine, when he discovered her desertion, felt quite broken-hearted. Her utter indifference towards him increased his infatuation. Swearing terrible vengeance against Searight, he bought a huge sjambok for the purpose of inflicting personal chastisement. Fear, however, prevented him from carrying this out. The man who had stolen his mistress had earned a name for being able to handle his fists expeditiously, through having, when slightly under the influence of liquor, smashed two coloured cabmen, and also through having the cleverness to discern in a dispute those whom he could with impunity frighten by fierce looks and gestures. Besides, Ikey realised that he himself was a man of small stature compared with the other. What possible chance could he have in a contest where physical strength was required? It would only be a case of having injury heaped on injury. He eventually consoled himself, after a few days' hard drinking, by taking into the well-appointed house lately abdicated by May Leslie a flaxen-haired lady, who had dispensed various kinds of liquid refreshments in a noted bar and billiard saloon, called after its proprietor, "Carme's."

Searight now only gambled when he needed money to help towards current expenses, which, on account of their extravagant mode of living, soon threatened to overwhelm him and his companion in debt. Through carefully avoiding the Tinlin class whenever he essayed to play at pool, whist, or any game where skill was combined with chance, he more than held his own. But May Leslie's attractions were even greater now than billiards or cards.

Never before had this impulsive Irishman been so drawn to a woman. Her notoriety and good looks made him feel proud of his conquest, and the sacrifice she had made through her fondness for him flattered his vanity.

At the end of six months the money obtained by the sale of the stolen diamond and the little May Leslie had left after furnishing the cottage was all gone. Not only were they in debt, but, worse still, all credit was stopped.

They were sitting, just after having finished breakfast, on the sofa, she at one end reading the newspaper, he at the other gloomily meditating. A Kafir boy was clearing the breakfast things away. Searight, looking the picture of despair, wondered what could be done. Times were bad, and there was nothing much to be made at billiards or cards; besides, he was getting known: inferior players were beginning to be chary of him. It was indeed, he felt, a blank look-out. What hurt him most was to think that this woman would now have to leave him for a more wealthy protector. This thought was torture, and, notwithstanding his affection, he would, he felt, sooner shoot her than this should happen. The reaction after all his late gaiety and dissipation increased the miserable feeling that now possessed him.

At length May Leslie laid down her paper and glanced at him. Quickly observing his woe-begone looks, she began to chaff him. "Why, Charlie! What on earth is the matter with you? Did you ever see such a glum look? My goodness, what is wrong?" And then assuming the caressing tone of a mother to her child, she went on: "Now, zen, duckey, what is it, zen, eh? Did anybody hurt the ickle dear? Tell me, cherub, what was se matter wis 'im; tum tell me, zen."

"The matter?" he exclaimed, and he told her of all his vexing thoughts, and concluded by saying bitterly: "Of course, it's all right for you, a good-looking woman can always get along; but what is a poor beggar like me to do, a gentleman, too, who has always been accustomed to have everything comfortable before coming out to this wretched country. I would not care so much only I have got so beastly fond of you." And then he looked utterly cast down.

May Leslie yearned to take him to her arms, to lay his head upon her bosom, and soothe and comfort him, to tell

him she would never, never leave him, no matter how poor he became. As she gazed at him she experienced a pang of sorrow, in which pleasure was, however, strangely mixed. Oh, the delight she would have now in cheering him, in chasing away his grief! She felt tempted to prolong, to even increase, his drooping spirits, so as to make the task greater—to thus add to her labour of love. She affected gaiety. "Go on, Charlie," she said; "don't try to make a fool of me. You can get lots of money whenever you want. I'm 'wide,' my boy!" She shook her head knowingly.

"What are you driving at?" he asked wonderingly.

"I know! I know!" she said merrily.

"Don't be a fool," Searight exclaimed impatiently. "One would think you took a pleasure in seeing a fellow down on his luck, for instead of trying to cheer, you do your best to taunt and tease."

Still she retained her merry expression, and then, dropping her voice as if she were afraid of being heard by anyone outside, she said, "Look here, Charlie Searight, don't try to gammon me, old chappie; it won't wash, don't you know. Everybody in Kimberley knows you are an I.D.B."

Searight started violently.

"Yes," she went on again, "an I.D.B.; you need not look so surprised. Does not everyone know that you were silly enough to sell a stone to Faganstine for a hundred quid that he sold afterwards for sixteen hundred? Yes, and the man who bought it from him, Elias Eliason, sold it again for £2,000."

"Never!" Searight screamed, as he started to his feet, "You don't mean that? Oh, the dirty low hound of a thief! The beast! I should like to strangle him!"—and a diabolical look came into his eyes.

"Yes," broke in May Leslie. "Anyone could see that you were new to the business; but all the same you are put down for an I.D.B. Faganstine was so proud of having done such a good stroke of biz that he could not keep it to himself. I knew all about the affair before I met you. One night at supper at Mosetenstine's, after card-playing, Faganstine made us all laugh—you know the funny way he talks. Well he tried to imitate you, the way you speak, you know. 'No really. Ah, my deah fellah—

aw, don't ye know'—that sort of thing; and he told us of your wonderful story about the diamond, how you had seen it drop from underneath the blanket of a Kaffir. He said that he only offered you twenty pounds just to try you, to see if you knew anything about the value of diamonds, and when you asked two hundred and fifty, he soon saw you were only a beginner at the business. Why he said he was prepared to give you £900."

Searight now became absolutely prostrate. He was penniless; he might still have been the possessor of hundreds. Why had he not taken greater pains and ascertained the value of such a stone? He could easily have managed this. Not only was he laughed at for a fool, but branded for ever as an I.D.B. This was the reason that the I.D.B. fraternity had of late become familiar, and why many of his old acquaintances had avoided him—and that, too, after his apparently better circumstances. Their coldness grieved him sorely; he had puzzled his brain to discover the cause. It was not his gambling with and losing his late employer's money, because it was some time after his dismissal that he had observed the general coolness of his former friends. That mistake would be thought little of in Kimberley. Now everything was made clear to him: he was known as an I.D.B. This was about the worst thing that could happen to anyone who desired to be thought respectable on the Diamond Fields. He realised how he would be looked upon by that class whose good opinion he had most desired. They would shun him as a social leper. Again he cursed Faganstine, his luck, and everything else. Never before had he suffered such misery.

May Leslie looked at him fondly. Her eyes filled with tears, she felt so full of a sweet sentimentality as she witnessed his utter hopelessness. She delayed the pleasure she anticipated in raising him out of the slough of despond, and then she rose, went near to him, and gazed upon him with a passionate look. When she could no longer resist, she threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him repeatedly. What exquisite delight she felt as she, sobbing gently, pressed him to her breast and fondly smoothed his hair!

This outburst of affection from the woman who had always been considered cold and sordid was a source of

gratification even in the midst of Searight's troubles. A delicious state of calm crept over him, as if the stroking of her hands on his head had a hypnotising effect. They remained in this loving embrace for some time. Then at length gently disengaging herself, she went into the bedroom and stood opposite a mirror set in a wardrobe, which reflected her whole figure. She put herself into an attitude somewhat resembling the devotional young woman that had seemed so incongruous to Searight on Faganstine's walls. She assumed, as she crossed her hands in front, a pathetic look, which was heightened by her tear-stained face. The actress was still strong in her. She thought, as she felt conscious of a sweet melancholy, how well she could have played at that moment a part that required a great conception of pathos. Well, love was everything after all! Never before had she known such happiness. Then she dried her eyes and returned to her lover. She put a hand on his shoulder, and softly spoke, "Charlie, dearest Charlie, oh, I do love you! Come with me, darling, come. I have something to show you. Come inside with me."

Leading the way into her room, she went to what Searight had always thought an empty box against the wall, close to the head of the bed, and lifting the cover exposed a small safe. Next drawing a red plush-covered table close, she unlocked the safe and produced gem after gem, jewel after jewel, ring after ring, ladies' tiny watches, tiaras, pendants, charms, lockets, gentlemen's pins, childish baubles she had stored up almost from her infancy. She piled them on the small table in a confused heap. She gazed fondly at her treasures, the hoarding of which had been the greatest pleasure of her life.

Searight looked on with eyes beaming with greed, and evil thoughts passed through his brain.

Then May Leslie put an arm round his neck, and clasping his hand, and drawing his face down until it reached hers, cheek against cheek, she whispered softly: "They are all yours, darling, and I am yours, yours for ever. You will never want as long as I can work for you, never! You see, we'll sell these things and raise some money, and then start buying diamonds. I know all the tricks of the trade, I tell you, every one. Ikey Mosetenstine used to let me manage his whole business."

The girl blushed. "You have no idea how clever I am;" she nodded her head gravely, with a touch of vanity, at thoughts of her own capability. "I'll defy any detective to catch me; I am too slim* for them, believe me. No fear of me being caught. But you, you big goosey, you would soon get copped, and what would I do without you for seven long years? Ah, we women are by far the cleverest, take my tip. Men gas so; they are so vain that if they make a few more pounds than usual over a stone they blow about it all over the shop. A clever woman is the one for this kind of trade. I don't know anything so exciting as scheming how to get your stuff across the border of the Free State; how to do the detectives a shot in the eye. Oh, Charlie, it is glorious fun, you have no idea. But, sweetest, we won't stay here after we have made sufficient oof. In a year or two, if we are at all careful, we ought to make enough money to live-on comfortably all our lives. You know then we'll go to some other country and hold our heads as high as anybody else. Australia, America, England, or any place, as long as we are together, eh, darling? It does not matter a fig how we are looked upon here. Anyhow, we will be no worse than others. Why, 'They all do it, they all do it,' she sang gaily. Everybody in Kimberley, take my tip, is more or less connected with I.D.B. Look at these licensed diamond-buyers, look at these Colonial merchants of the first standing, too, in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Natal, who buy illicit stones, well knowing, by the small prices asked, that they have come through an illegitimate channel. Do you mean to tell me that these highly respectable individuals are not more guilty than the poor wretches who risk their liberty by buying straight from the raw Kaffirs? These are, at least, above making any hypocritical pretence about it. It is only natural—you can't get away from it—that the merchants do their best to increase their business by trying to attract the custom of the men who are the most reckless and extravagant with their money; that the doctors and lawyers, too, should be the most attentive and civil to their best paying patients and clients. You take notice at a Parliamentary election how the candidates do their best to secure the votes of the I.D.B.s. See how each does his best to

* Cunning.

secure the services of Faganstine. Why is he so successful? Why? Because he is so well in with the I.D.B.s. Those who cry out the loudest against illicit buying and its harmful effects are, as a rule, the ones who have made or are making money by it. Yes, just like certain ladies who are not quite like the driven snow, but wanting to call attention and advertise their own honesty and virtue, howl out terribly against those who, less fortunate than themselves, are found out. I tell you that there is scarcely a soul on the Fields, parsons and all included, who does not make ooftish out of I.D.B. Yes, and fight and scramble, too, for a good share. Even the shareholders of companies, and the diggers who suffer most by it, play at the game of 'cut-throat,' each one for himself. Ah, believe me, old boy, when you come to analyse, the poor illicit is the least deserving of punishment of the whole lot, although they do make a scapegoat of him, and advocate flogging, twenty years' penal servitude—yes, even hanging, for I.D.B. Well, Charlie, old boy, we may as well have a cut in with the rest. I don't want you to do anything, sweetest, only to enjoy yourself and love your May."

She then stood up and said, "Charlie, come."

Searight rose.

"Give me your hand. Will you love me always?"

"Yes, always."

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes, I swear it."

"Kiss me, then!"

He took her in his arms as they stood close to the little plush-covered table, piled with the gems and jewels. It was like an altar, with all which she had hitherto prized the most placed upon it as a sacrifice to him whom she had learned to love.

Then Searigh tembraced her, with his eyes fixed on the glittering heap upon the table.

CHAPTER IX.

SENIOR remained unemployed. He could not make it out, and his sensitive nature was hurt. Whenever he applied for a situation as overseer on a vacancy occurring, the mere mention of his name was sufficient for him to meet with abrupt refusal.

The fact of the matter was this: Mr. Stewart had become infatuated with the idea of showing the patrons of the "fancy" on the Diamond Fields how little they knew, and what poor judgment they had in pugilistic matters, by picking up a young lad, a gentleman, too, who, though giving away no end of weight, could polish off their so-called champions with ease. He had tried every legitimate means of bringing this about, and having failed, he had now recourse to a piece of generalship, as he termed it, of which he himself did not feel proud. But then the lad was standing in his own light, and he felt justified in this case in doing evil for the sake of bringing forth good. The old Scotchman sent round word to all the mine managers on the Fields on no account to engage a man named Senior, late in the employ of the "Violet" Company. No reason was given for this by him, but that was quite enough to prevent Senior from getting a situation in any of the mining companies. Theft or illicit diamond buying was imputed as the cause of Mr. Stewart's action in the matter. The latter was going to try to starve the young Englishman into submission.

Senior had a few acquaintances, but only one friend in Kimberley. This friend was a young Jew, Joseph Leonard by name, not yet of age, but, like many youths of his race, sensible beyond his years. He was clerk to the magistrate of Du Toits Pan. His father had been one of the wealthy men of the Diamond Fields, but, like many more, had been ruined by speculation during the late "scrip mania."

Leonard had taken lessons in boxing from Senior in Cape Town, where he had first met him. Being slender and not over strong, he looked upon his instructor as a prodigy of power and pluck.

The young clerk was quiet and affectionate; like Senior, idealistic, yet tending to cynicism. In their long

walks in the evenings and on holidays it was amusing to hear these two men in the early spring of their manhood holding forth on the utter hollowness of the world, and airing their views as to what constituted an ideal man or woman.

Leonard had done his towards best trying to get his friend a situation, but to no purpose. When the latter had told him in confidence of his boxing encounter with Tinlin, and Mr. Stewart's anxiety to match him against Dooley and Joe the Brum, also his promise to make him a present of the winning stakes if he pulled it off, Leonard had strongly advised him to accept the offer. The young clerk liked the idea of seeing his friend looked upon as a hero by the free-and-easy digging community of Kimberley; besides, could not he, himself, make some money on the quiet? Long odds would be sure to be laid against Senior. But to do Leonard justice, this last consideration did not weigh with him much in trying to get the other to do as Mr. Stewart wished. It was chiefly the anticipation of the great triumph he would gain in laying low the colours of those big hulking brutes, Joe the Brum and Dooley; and besides, he being the chum of this fistic hero, the lustre would even extend to himself.

Returning from a walk Leonard volunteered to see the other home. The clerk was trying his best to put this pugilistic matter in as sensible, practicable, and favourable a light as he could. His arguments were much the same as Mr. Stewart's.

"Now look here, Senior," he went on, "if I were you I would not study my friends or relations in the matter; self preservation you know! Anyhow you can always, if they should hear about it, put things in such a way that, instead of their thinking you had made a blackguard of yourself you would appear a grand hero in their eyes. This is the sort of thing you could say: There was a tremendous big fellow, a bully, a regular prize-fighter on the Diamond Fields. The brute used to knock unoffending residents about, play up ructions all round, and as there was very little law in the place—this they'll believe, as they think at home this is a howling wilderness of evil, revolver-shooting, and lynch law, and all that sort of thing—everybody stood in terror of him. One day he happened to make a most cowardly and unprovoked

attack on a friend of yours—you can say it was me, if you like. He knocked his eye out and broke one of his arms—ah, but that would not do if it had to be corroborated afterwards—well, he did him some great injury at the time, if not a permanent one. You, of course, could not stand this, the sight of your suffering friend, etc.! The tales you heard about this man fired your Saxon blood. The man was an Italian you can say; every little thing will help, you know. Well, you, though fearing annihilation, considered it your duty to challenge him to fistic combat, and he accepting, with sneering derision at your audacity, you met him, and the result was, of course, virtue triumphant. There were, you believe, a few bets made by people that you would be killed, but of course over that you had no control. After the contest you were waited upon by the inhabitants, who presented an address, and thanked you for the happy deliverance you so heroically effected. What do you think of that? Why it is quite a novel, eh? I only wish I could make a £1,000 by licking some brute, would not I jump at it! By Jove, you bet!”

Senior laughed, and then said, “As if anyone would swallow such exaggerated nonsense. But when a man comes to look into the thing there is nothing much in it, is there? You and I shake hands with any amount of fellows who do things a thousand times worse every day of their lives. But I don’t know how it is, prejudice, I suppose, you would call it, but I can’t get over the idea that to go and try to smash a fellow’s face for no other reason than to make money is altogether too cold-blooded and brutal. You know I would not mind having a turn with either Dooley or the other fellow, who calls himself the Champion of South Africa. Wouldn’t a fellow get no end of kudos if he licked those big bruisers! and Stewart offered to lay me £100 to £10 that I should. If I only had a good excuse I should not mind. Instead of being brutal it would look chivalrous if a case really cropped up something like that which you now invented. Why, then, I should not hesitate a moment!”

“Why don’t you try and get some pupils here? I should think you ought to do something at that.”

“Well, you see that fellow Weeder was here for years, and probably he worked the place out. Another thing, I am not known as a boxer. I promised old Stewart I would

not say a word about my licking Tinlin, and when he found me a billet, too, he made me give him my word that I would not put on the gloves with any man without his consent—though I suppose that is cancelled now since he called me a ‘funk.’ I believe, mind you, though, that the old chap is sincere enough; he is mad on pugilism, and I am certain in my own mind he was only trying to put me on my mettle,—to get me to fight just to show that fear had nothing to do with my objections.”

They had now drawn close to a bar called “The New Dug Out,” in that corner of the diamond market near to which was Senior’s place of abode, the “Albion.” Leonard proposed a drink. This place was kept by a couple, who, though unmarried, were in partnership. The latter, Mrs. Getit, as she was called, was a well-formed woman, inclined to stoutness, in age somewhere between thirty and forty. She was famed for her repartee and wit, and as the “smartest” woman in the liquor business in Kimberley. As Senior and Leonard entered, Mrs. Getit was holding three diamond dealers in noisy laughter by the relation of a story, the fun of which was of a questionable character. Near her stood a barmaid, a young girl about sixteen, who was also joining heartily in the merriment. The men familiarly addressed her as “Cheeky.” She had only been up from Cape Town four months, but in that short space of time had become quite an adept in the art of drawing men on to spend their money. Mrs. Getit was pleased to say of her that she was the best girl she had ever had behind a bar, and that she sold more bottles of “fizz” than any three average girls put together.

Cheeky was rather under the medium height. Her figure was trim and neat, and showed signs of budding into that of a handsome woman. She had brown hair and brown eyes, large and soft, like those of a gazelle. She had a well-shaped mouth, the short upper lip of which exposed, as if in chronic smile, an even row of white and perfectly shaped teeth. Her hands, though little in size, showed signs of hard work, the joints of her fingers being thickened, and the nails short and badly kept.

Senior and his friend having taken up their position at the bar some little distance from the other group, Cheeky

came to attend upon their wants. A sherry and a pontac were called for, and the girl, with thoughts of getting them to spend more money, and thereby gaining compliments and a liberal commission—Mrs. Getit being discreetly generous—commenced to make herself agreeable.

"Been for a walk? Ain't it cold, though?" she asked.

Senior noticed that she had an honest, pretty face, and a mild, musical voice. He felt attracted. He began talking to her, and quite came out of his shell. He questioned her as to how long she had been up in Kimberley, where her parents were, and so on. "What is your right name, may I ask, please?" Senior was always deferential to women, no matter who and what they were.

"Well," she replied, "mother called me Liz, and here they call me 'Cheeky'; but Eliza is my right name. What is yours?"

"Senior," replied he.

"Your first name, is it?"

"No. John is my Christian name."

"Oh! you are a Jack! I love Jacks, they are always so nice. I say, Jack," here she leant over the bar and whispered, "stand me a small bottle; I'm awfully seedy to-night, somehow; do, and I'll give you a kiss, you naughty boy." She gave Senior a coquettish look, and winked knowingly.

"A very strong inducement indeed," he said, "but, unfortunately, I can't afford it. Do you like Kimberley?" he inquired.

"Yes, very much; lots of go here, you know; plenty of money. Oh, it's far livelier than at the Cape."

"Do you like this kind of business? I mean bar business?"

"Oh, yes! it is all right when trade is good. I like taking in the pieces, you see; I never feel tired then."

"But don't you get tired of the continual amount of rot different fellows keep talking to you all day? You have to smile and pretend to like it. It must be very sickening I should think."

"Well, yes, it is sometimes, I suppose, especially when you don't care for them."

"Now just listen to those fellows and that woman," Senior went on; "does not that sort of talk disgust you?"

I don't think it is right that a pretty young girl like you [here the girl bridled and winked again] should be in a place like this, hearing all that sort of rubbish. It does not seem fair."

Cheeky opened her eyes and looked at him thoughtfully; then, which was quite unusual, felt shy. This young fellow did not talk to her like the others. Was it not right and clever after all for people to say smart things with meanings to them? She had a faint idea that rich ladies did not talk so; that was, she had thought, because they were soft and foolish and knew nothing of the world, as they never went out anywhere, except to a few parties and on Sundays to church. "Are you religious?" she asked Senior.

"No, not exactly; but I like to see girls get a fair show. A youngster like you, you see, in a place like this, with such an example as that shown by Mrs. Getit, a woman of her age and smart in her way, too, will in time get to think black is white and wrong is right, if you don't think so already. What would your mother say? What would she think if she knew you heard this sort of talk constantly?" added Senior, as he nodded his head towards the woman and the three diamond dealers, who were vying with one another in telling racy stories.

"My mother! Why gracious me, she could give them all a start! Especially when she has a drop of liquor in! Oh, my word! she is as warm as you make 'em." Then the girl laughed at some reminiscences of this worthy parent.

"Poor girl!" Senior ejaculated in a tone of such sincere pity that it went straight to her heart and a slight choking sensation rose in her throat, the reason for which she knew not.

Senior was sympathetic, and he felt for the poor little girl amidst her vile surroundings. How could this youngster's mind become anything but distorted and crooked, he thought. These brutes of men, men of some education and means, too, encouraging this child to vicious ways by their suggestive stories, their boisterous laughter when she fouled her mouth to please them! There was good in her, he could see it plainly written in her face. There was but small chance for it to thrive. Some day in the future, she, too, would be like this

brazen, depraved woman, her mistress, only less prosperous, for Mrs. Getit, through her clever worldliness, had set up for herself many of the treasures of this life.

The young girl had fixed her eyes upon his face in wonderment. She could read there, instinctively, that his thoughts were of herself, and kindly ones.

"Good-night, Miss Eliza," he said, in such a kindly, pitying voice, that again that choking sensation rose. He held out his hand.

"Good-night, sir," she replied softly, and she shook his hand across the bar. Senior and Leonard then took their leave. When they got outside, Senior began dilating at some length on the crime of letting young girls serve in bars. "It was an apprenticeship to a life of immorality," he said. "But you know," he went on, "one can't help realising the emptiness of sentiment, the unreality of it. Now, if this girl had been a plain little beggar, and, say, just as good and nice as 'Cheeky,' as they call her, or even better, instead of our being sorry for her, and all that sort of thing, we would be simply disgusted—call her an ugly coarse little brute, and think no more about her."

Cheeky remained with her elbows on the bar, and her face resting on her hands. She felt strangely disquieted, dissatisfied in an indescribable sort of way.

One of the diamond dealers, the eldest of the three, a man with grey hairs, on seeing their little favourite so quiet and even troubled-looking—had he not a daughter about the same age at school in Cape Town?—tried to brighten her up. "Cheeky," said he, "why you have been missing all the fun talking to those two brats of boys. Did you hear Mrs. Getit's latest? Have you told her?" he said, addressing that lady. "No? All right, I'll tell her; she looks as if she wanted a good laugh," and then he started to relate the last funny tale that had afforded them all such mirth.

But, shortly after he began, Cheeky turned round with flashing eyes, and, to the astonishment of them all, even including her own self, she exclaimed:

"Mr. Maeker, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! A man like you, with grey hairs, old enough to be my grandfather, too, talking to me, only a slip of a girl, like that. I don't want to hear any of your nasty nonsense."

They all stared at one another. What on earth had come over Cheeky? Her reproof made them feel awkward and uncomfortable. Mr. Maeker, who liked to be thought a jovial fellow, quite young yet—anyhow in the prime of life, and to whom the charms of female youth formed still a particular weakness—felt crushed and depressed. One of his friends asked him to join with them all in a drink. He sulkily refused. The others drank without him. A few weak attempts were made to resuscitate their departed gaiety, but they ended in sickly failure. They then wished Mrs. Getit and the girl good-night, and silently left the bar.

After their departure Mrs. Getit gently chided the girl for her bad temper. Girls were scarce and so independent, and this one was valuable. Tact had to be used to show her that she had done wrong, and to prevent a repetition of the same sort of thing.

"Cheeky! Cheeky! you naughty child, I am surprised at you!" said the woman. "What on earth did you snub poor old Maeker like that for? You know he is one of my best customers, and he has taken quite a fancy to you. Look at all the presents he has given you, you silly! You must get a hold of him and coax him. You know he hates to be called an old man. Now, to-morrow I'll tell him that you want to see him particularly, and then when he comes you can kid to him; you know how to do it."

The young barmaid stood silent, with her face still resting on her hands and her elbows on the bar-counter. She did not even hear what her mistress was saying to her. She felt tired—she had had altogether a busy and exciting day of it, and her nerves were a little unstrung. She was going over in her mind the whole of the conversation she had had with Senior. The words "poor girl!" with the sympathy contained in them, were ringing in her ears. She again felt the choking sensation they at first produced, and she could hardly get her breath. At length the relief came with a flood of tears, and she sobbed as if heart-broken. Mrs. Getit looked on in amazement.

In the heart of this poor little waif the first good seed that went forth from the Sower had found its way. It fell upon good soil, but around were the weeds rank with the growth of years. It surely needed a kind and skilful

gardener to uproot them and look after the sprouting of the lonely seed : to nourish it, and give it the tenderest of care.

CHAPTER X.

SENIOR now frequently called in at the "New Dug Out." He found his interest in Cheeky increasing. The girl visibly brightened whenever he came, and would, even to the neglect of the best paying customers, come to talk to him. This, he thought, could not be barmaid coquettishness, as Cheeky well knew that neither money nor presents were to be got out of him. Senior was plain-looking, and, though his face had a quiet, kindly, and refined expression, he was not the sort of man, in appearance, speech, or manner, calculated to attract a girl of the class from which barmaids are recruited. He knew this, and Cheeky's seeming preference flattered him. Since he had become more intimate with her, he noticed, too, that a change was gradually but surely taking place in the girl—she was becoming more quiet, modest, and subdued in manner. Senior used to tell her of the English and Australian country life, of bushrangers and adventures. His conversation was altogether different from that of the general run of Mrs. Getit's customers, who had at first been attracted to the "New Dug Out" by their appreciation of the landlady's racy wit; and, although he did not go in for much moralising, still there was always conveyed in his tales so keen an admiration for the better side of the characters of the men and women about whom he spoke, that a healthy effect was produced on the young girl's impressionable mind.

Mrs. Getit observed with concern the alteration in her barmaid—an alteration in her eyes for the worse—and the falling off of the businesslike and attractive qualities she had before spoken so highly of. The frequenters, too, of the "New Dug Out" spoke of the great difference that had come over the once lively and irrepressible Cheeky, now voting her slow and stupid. The landlady, even, began to feel uncomfortable when telling one of her anec-

dotes in front of this girl, who now not only showed no interest in, but rather disgust at, tales which formerly amused her.

Mrs. Getit talked to the girl long and earnestly, but the other did not respond to her exhortations to "turn over a new leaf," or, rather, to go back a few pages, but seemed completely indifferent; appeared to have lost all ambition to shine.

The former did not suspect the cause of this change until, one day, when she had been expostulating with Cheeky as to her silliness and want of gumption in not encouraging Mr. Maeker's advances, he being such a generous old fellow, and also one of the best customers, the girl had replied that she hated "the old brute," and "if he tried any of his nonsense on" with her, she would "smack his face for him." Senior here happened to enter, and the observant Mrs. Getit noticed Cheeky's face brighten at once. She wondered if there could possibly be anything between this fellow, who rarely spent more than a sixpence at a time, and her barmaid. She moved about, apparently taking no notice, but listening attentively to their conversation.

After Cheeky had served Senior with a glass of sherry, she enquired anxiously if he had heard of anything yet, he having informed her of his enforced idleness.

"No," he replied; "I am getting sick of hunting round. Hope deferred—you know! If I were a good-looking girl like you, now, I suppose I should easily get a billet," he added, with a smile.

"Would you, if you were a girl like me, go into a bar?"

"Well that all depends. If I thought about bar-life as I do now, I would rather take a place as a nurse or scullery maid."

"Ah! but then you would get very low wages, and hardly ever be allowed out, and have no fun."

"Yes, that is so; barmaids get splendid wages, at least here in Kimberley, a great deal better than men of education at home. But what are women employed in the bar for? Just for a bait, as it were, to cover the hook to catch silly men, to draw them on to drink a great deal more than is good for them, and by appealing to their worst feelings to get them to spend money—perhaps that

they cannot afford. A husband, a father, it might be, leaves his wife and children unprovided for, or a youngster ruins his constitution, and often gets into debt, or spends money that doesn't belong to him, running after girls who only make fun of him and lead him on. I wonder how much crime has been caused by drink, and what share such women have had in it by enticing men to take too much. It must, anyhow, do a young woman a lot of harm, that sort of thing—hearing and seeing all the drunken coarseness that goes on around. Did I ever tell you about a lady that went behind a bar in Melbourne?"

"No, you never did; do tell me, please."

"Well, shortly after I arrived in Melbourne, I went into a bar one day with another fellow to have a drink. I was greatly struck with the appearance of the girl who served us. She was tall and pretty, with nice manners, and looked a lady. Her hands were white, you know, and her fingers well-shaped; her nails were clean and nicely kept, and you could see she was not used to work of that sort. [Here Cheeky glanced at her own ill-kept finger-nails, blushed, and hid her hands underneath the counter.] Immediately after she had served us, two fellows a bit on came in and called for a couple of drinks. After they had got them they commenced to chaff this girl in the usual sort of way, and tried to get some fun out of her. The girl got fiery red at their coarse language, left the bar, and went into a small parlour at the back. I could hear her sobbing. I felt so much for her that I went in and expressed regret at the way her feelings had been outraged, and tried my best to soothe her. She seemed comforted by my sympathy, you know, and, after a little talking she told me her history.

"She was the daughter of a curate, who had only lately died and left her mother, three sisters, a brother, and herself almost penniless. She had come out to Australia to take a situation as governess in a family, having been engaged through some agent at home. When she arrived, however, she found the family had gone to New Zealand for some reason or other, and had left no instructions behind. She was landed without friends or money. In desperation she had taken a place as barmaid. Well, do you know, nearly a year after I happened to come down

to Melbourne on a visit, and saw this same girl in some other bar. As I came in she was talking and laughing with some fellows. To my astonishment—I could hardly believe it was the same girl—she was talking—well, you know, almost as bad as your mistress does sometimes. The expression of her face had changed, the mild look had gone, and she had got quite bold and brazen. I felt so sorry for the poor girl. You see that is what a year of bar-life had done for her.”

Cheeky said nothing when Senior concluded. She stared vacantly at the ceiling of the bar-room. She was thinking of the poor pretty girl, a lady, too, getting so soon spoilt by her own vocation.

Mrs. Getit had heard every word, and she felt satisfied now as to the cause of the girl's late “silliness.” She was wroth to think that this penniless fellow was interfering with her barmaid, was hurting her business by all this folly with which he was affecting her. She vowed to herself that she was not going to pay for a girl's passage up from Cape Town, give her board and lodging and £12 a month, for her to encourage such poverty-stricken ninnies, and leave the best paying customers out in the cold. Was it not aggravating even to think of?

She sharply called out “Eliza Smirker, come here.” The girl, after telling Senior to wait, went.

“Go into my room, I want to speak to you about something.”

The girl obeyed.

Senior was still leaning up against the bar where he had been when talking to Cheeky. Mrs. Getit came and stood opposite him on the inside. “Well,” she said, addressing him with impudent tone, “can I do anything for you?”

“No, thank you, I have been served.”

“Oh, have you? Are you waiting for someone, then?”

“No.”

“Oh, I thought perhaps you were; we don't want any loafers in here, if you please.”

The blood rushed to Senior's face. There were two diamond brokers in the bar, who, upon the landlady making this remark, looked at one another and smiled. He wished that one of them would say something; that quality that Mr. Stewart had found out and admired so much was slightly roused. His glass was still unemptied,



Cheeky said nothing when Senior concluded. She stared vacantly at the ceiling of the bar-room. She was thinking of the poor pretty girl, a lady, too, getting so soon spoiled by her own vocation.

—Page 90.



he took it between finger and thumb, held it up, and twirled it round.

"Do you hear what I say to you? We don't want any loafers here," the woman repeated.

Senior's blood was boiling, but still he said nothing. He could not for the world find anything to say; he tried to think of something, but failed. Again he looked at the two brokers, hoping that they would help him out of his difficulty by interfering; but no, for there was now a look on his face that put that entirely out of the question; they no longer even smiled.

Mrs. Getit began to feel uneasy as she waited anxiously for this young fellow to speak so as to give her a chance of "slanging him roundly."

At last she lost her patience and exclaimed, "You silly loafing brute! why don't you speak?" And then she applied a vile epithet to him.

Senior finished his sherry, set the empty glass down, looked at the woman steadily for a few moments, then gravely lifting off his hat, said with quiet, sarcastic politeness, "Madam, allow me, you certainly are a lady." Then he turned and walked slowly out of the bar.

The utter contempt conveyed in those few words hurt Mrs. Getit a great deal more than if all the vilest names in Billingsgate had been hurled at her.

She wisely said nothing to the girl about Senior and what she had overheard. She knew something of human nature. If she scolded this girl about the matter it would probably only make her more obstinate. Now it was not likely that this young fellow would come back after the good snubbing she had given him. Cheeky would wonder and regret his absence at first, get piqued, then forget him altogether and all the nonsense he had been putting into her head. Mrs. Getit went to her room and told the girl that it did not matter now what she was going to speak about, it would do some other time; in the meantime she had better go and attend to the bar, as she, her mistress, wanted to lie down.

After Mrs. Getit's unprovoked insults, Senior was undecided as whether or not to brave her by going to see little Cheeky as usual. Eventually he decided not to do so. He certainly did not relish the idea of being slanged by this woman's vile tongue before other fellows.

Another thing, would not he get his little friend into trouble? And, after all, was it a wise thing to make this girl dissatisfied with her lot? What else could she look forward to? It would be nonsense to expect her to go as a servant to some family; and quite impossible for her to go as a nursery governess. No; it was best to leave her alone and let her forget him and the influence he had of late been exercising over her.

He missed her greatly, however. Those little chats of theirs had been a source of pleasure and something to look forward to. It was such a pity, too, that the only proper course seemed to be to leave such a pretty, interesting little girl, who had so much natural goodness, to go to the dogs without holding out a helping hand.

Cheeky wondered and fretted at Senior's non-appearance. He could not be ill, as she had often seen him passing the door. The result of his influence was already an isolation from those around her. His sympathy had become a necessity. This girl, young as she was, who when but a mere child had been forced to take an active part in the struggle for life, possessed some strength of character and pertinacity of purpose, but like the ivy-plant with its stubborn vigour, she needed the sturdier tree to cling to for support.

She waited for a week. Then she could stand it no longer. Every other afternoon she had to herself, so one day, about three o'clock, by a circuitous route, she arrived at the "Albion," knocked at the door, and on its being opened by Mrs. Frilling, asked boldly whether Mr. Senior was at home.

"Yes; come in, please," the lady of the boarding-house said, and Cheeky stepped into the passage. Mrs. Frilling was struck, and after feasting her eyes on her youthful beauty, she took Cheeky by surprise, and filled her with a strange loathing by suddenly embracing her.

"Hi! what is up with you?" exclaimed Cheeky, as she roughly tried to disengage herself. "Here, let me go. Do you hear?"

"Oh, all right, deary. Don't be cross! you are so pretty, and I could not help myself. You want to see Mr. Senior? Well, there is his room, and he is in, too; you had better go in if you want to see him." And off Mrs. Frilling went.

Cheeky knocked at the door pointed at. Senior asked, "Who is there?" The girl opened the door and went in.

He was seated at a small table writing. He immediately rose, showing in his face a pleased bewilderment. He held out his hand, and said, "Hillo, little girl! What are you doing here? I am awfully glad to see you."

After shaking hands, without saying a word, she took off her hat and threw it on the bed, and then sitting on a low easy-chair close to the window, placed her hands behind her head, leaned back, and stared at Senior.

"Well," he broke in with a laugh, "you evidently believe in making yourself at home. What is up now? Do you want to see me about anything, eh?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, what is it?"

"Where have you been all this time?"

"Oh, I have lots to do, you know," he stammered.

"Now, that'll do, Jack. I have seen you pass several times, and you have looked in, too, as if you wanted to come in, but did not like to. Now tell me, what is the matter?" She got up to shut the door, but Senior interfered.

"No, don't shut the door," he said.

"Has anyone been running me down to you, Jack?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then what is the matter? Tell me."

"Well, you see," Senior replied, "I am only a poor beggar, and, in any case, I am not one of those fellows who make the money fly round. Your mistress pays you high wages to entertain those who do, don't you know, so it is hardly fair of me to come so often and take up so much of your time. Do you grasp that?"

She looked at him with a puzzled expression, then suddenly jumped up. "Oh, I have it," she exclaimed. "*She* has been talking to you. Ha, ha! now I have found out. I remember the day she sent me to her room and told me to wait there until she came, and when she did come she had nothing to say. She must have heard the story you told me about that girl in Australia." Then coming close to Senior, she placed a hand on his shoulder, and bringing

her face close peered into his like a little child and asked, "What did she say to you? tell me. What did she say?"

"Will you promise to say nothing about it to her if I tell you?"

"Yes, all right, I'll promise."

Senior then told her of the little scene that had taken place between her mistress and himself.

"Oh," the girl exclaimed, "the wretch! I only wish I had been there; I would have told her off. I know more about the old cat than she thinks. Oh, would I not like to pull her hair out!" Cheeky spread wide her fingers and then in imaginary clutch of Mrs. Getit's hair she tightly closed her hands. "I'll settle with her yet, just you wait," she added.

"But you promised——"

"Yes, I know, and I'll keep my promise."

Cheeky now appeared absent-minded; she was evidently revolving in her mind schemes of revenge for the indignity Mrs. Getit had offered to her friend.

Senior began to feel shy and awkward at the young girl remaining so long in his room. "Would you like to see my photographs?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, Jack, do please show them to me."

Senior got his album, and drew two chairs to the table for Cheeky and himself. As the girl turned over the leaves he noticed that her finger-nails were much cleaner than usual, and an attempt had evidently been made to trim them.

The photographs were mostly those of his friends and relations taken some years before. The dresses of the women were old-fashioned, as Cheeky remarked. When he came to his sister's photograph he paused and asked her if she could guess who that was.

"Why! she is like you, only better looking. She is your sister."

"Yes, you are right."

"Is it though! Ain't I clever?"

Senior then praised his sister. She was, he considered, the most unselfish woman in the world. She never thought of herself, but only of others. She had a great opinion of him. If she only really knew him she would be grieved and surprised to find how far short he came of her estimate.

Cheeky seemed rather jealous at this praise of another woman, and said, "Oh, I expect, if the truth were known, she is no wonder either." Senior made no reply.

When they came to Senior's mother, Cheeky, who thought that perhaps she had spoken somewhat unkindly of the sister, tried to make up for it by unstinted praise of Mrs. Senior. "Oh, my!" she said, "ain't she just nice? What a pretty lady, and what a fine rich dress she has on! She has, I bet, any amount of money and fine dresses, eh?"

As the girl bent a little lower towards Senior, the photograph being on his side of the album, her cheek touched his. She turned round, just as a child would, and kissed him.

He closed the album and started up; he felt his heart beat more quickly and his face glow. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I had forgotten;" then looking at his watch he went on, "I have no time to lose—and—but—I think—well, it will be time for you to go now, I——" and he opened the door, plainly signifying that she must go at once. After shaking his hand she said, "Well, Jack, I'll come and see you again soon, eh?"

"No, you had better not."

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know; you see—it is not the right thing."

"Why?"

"Well, people will talk, you know."

"Go on, Jack! I'll come; I must, I *must* see you!"

"Well, look here, now——"

"May I?"

"I—don't think you should, you know."

Then the girl, seeing him hesitate, said decidedly, "But I will. So long, Jack!" and off she tripped.

CHAPTER XI.

CHEEKY went back to the "New Dug Out" with thoughts of mischievous intent towards Mrs. Getit.

That lady had been waiting for her barmaid's arrival to

drive out with Mr. Maeker, it being his birthday. A landau and pair were at the door, and the landlady was decked out in gaudy though seasonable winter costume—a superabundance of furs and a wide-brimmed hat, adorned with huge black ostrich feathers, waving as she walked like the plumes of a hearse.

“Oh, Cheeky! that’s a good girl,” she exclaimed, as the girl made her appearance. “Get off your things as quickly as possible. I am going out for a drive with Mr. Maeker. Now see how much money you can take before I come back, like a dear. Business is getting very quiet.”

Cheeky did not reply, but looked terribly sulky.

Mrs. Getit, observing this, remarked to her male friends, “I don’t know what on earth is coming over that girl at all, at all. I shall have to get rid of her if she don’t improve soon. What a splendid girl she was at first, was she not? I never saw her like.”

“Perhaps she is in love—spooney on some bloke, you know,” suggested Mr. Maeker, as he experienced a painful twinge of jealousy at the thought.

The little girl, to please her mistress, and for the sake of what she could get out of him, had, by making herself agreeable and flattering his vanity, fairly won his heart. Her complete indifference to him now only made him crave after her the more.

The customers that came in during the landlady’s absence neither stayed long nor spent much. Cheeky’s cross looks and sulkiness frightened them away.

When Mrs. Getit returned from her drive she made straight for the till. Only a few shillings had been taken. She shut the drawer with a bang, looked fiercely at the girl, and gave forth a grunt suggestive of distrust and dissatisfaction. Cheeky took no notice. She was biding her time, and trying to formulate a complete and decisive plan of attack.

The girl’s ill-humour did not decrease as the evening wore on. Mrs. Getit thought: “I expect she has met that young man of hers, and he has told her of the good telling-off I gave him about a week ago. Ah, well, my patience won’t last much longer! I’ll give her the sack, bag and baggage, soon, if she don’t change for the better.”

This night a good many “rolled up” to the “New Dug Out,” and the weather, being more than usually cold, hot

toddy was in great request. A small kettle was kept continually boiling on top of a paraffin stove placed on the counter. Cheeky was busy slicing up lemons and mixing the steaming drinks.

Just a few minutes before twelve o'clock Mr. Maeker entered the bar. Being his birthday, he had, as he said, been "keeping it up." In a voice slightly thick he ordered drinks for "all round the show." "Many happy returns of the day" was drunk; then a short thick Scotchman inquired "An' hoo auld dae ye ca' yersel noo?"

"Me? I am forty-two," he answered.

"Forty-two! forty-two! That'll dae ye! You mean sixty-two!"

Everybody, being in good humour (the effect probably of the comforting hot drinks), laughed heartily at this. Even Maeker himself joined in feebly. After the merriment had subsided, the old diamond-dealer said, "Very good, yes, ha! ha! but really, though, joking apart, honest ingine! that is my age. Why I don't look any more, do I? What do you say, Cheeky?"

The girl, with feminine instinct, saw an opening for a little stab at the vanity of her mistress, who still liked to be thought youthful, as she showed by her style of dress. "Oh," said Cheeky, "if you ask me, you are old enough to be Mrs. Getit's father, anyhow; and she's no chicken. She is at least as old as you put yourself down for." This double-shafted sally produced roars of merriment again. Mrs. Getit put on a sickly smile to pretend that she was amused, but she could not help feeling nervous. She could see that a passage at arms was inevitable between herself and the girl, who, though little more than a child, indicated by her looks such an animal fierceness that even she, old campaigner as she was, well skilled in the use of the tongue, felt cowed.

Mr. Maeker was hurt at this second shot, but would not deign to show it. Assuming a rakish air, he said, "Cheeky, you little rogue, it is too bad of you to try and take a rise out of me like that. I'll just come and kiss you for it; anyway it is my birthday, so I must have one for a birthday present," and he went behind the bar towards the girl.

"Leave me alone, you horrid old beast; take your hands off, do you hear?" she exclaimed, as the old fellow tried to embrace her.

"Go on, yes, kiss her, take some of the nonsense out of her," said Mrs. Getit encouragingly.

Cheeky struggled hard, but the diamond-dealer was strong. He drew her face close to his, which was red, wrinkled, bloated, and coarse. The fumes of the strong drink he had taken sickened her. She contrasted the pleasant, refined face she had voluntarily kissed herself that day with this horrid one that was now oppressing her like a nightmare. The ill-humour that had been smouldering in her breast since she had discovered the reason of Senior's absenting himself, now burst forth into lurid flame. She seized an empty soda-water bottle with her left hand, her right was on the man's throat trying to keep his face from coming any nearer to hers, and with a savage blow she hit him over the right eye, making a deep cut about an inch long. Mr. Maeker quickly let go, ran out from behind the bar to the centre of the room, and held his head forward so as to keep his clothes from being soiled. The blood fell in big spats upon the floor.

No one said a word, all gazed in silence. Mrs. Getit was as white as a sheet.

Cheeky rushed from the scene. The landlady, recovering her presence of mind, and uttering loud threats of sending for the police, dipped her handkerchief into cold water, and bathed the wound.

Then murmuring voices of astonishment were heard. "By Jove," said one, "isn't she a spit-fire! I wouldn't have believed it."

"She used to be such a good-natured girl," remarked another.

"Well," rejoined a third, "I believe she is going off her nut, for she never objected before when he asked for a kiss."

In a few minutes Cheeky reappeared with cloak and hat in hand, and a small wooden box under her arm.

Mrs. Getit, seeing her thus ready to make her exit, exclaimed:

"Yes, you little hussy! Go out of my place! Go this minute! To-morrow I'll take fine care to have you locked up and brought before Mr. Truter, the magistrate, not only for this cowardly assault on this gentleman, who has been as kind to you as any father—look at the

presents he has given you—but also for robbing my till to give to that fancy man of yours.”

Cheeky here interrupted. “Yes, here are the presents, look,” she opened the box in her hand—after dropping her cloak and hat on the floor—and, taking out a watch, locket, two diamond rings, a brooch, a pair of earrings, and two or three other little trinkets, she placed them in a small heap on the floor, jumped on them, and, grinding them with her high heels, kept exclaiming, “There’s your fine presents! There’s your fine presents!”

Ever since the first night of meeting Senior she had been trying to put a bridle on her tongue. But now, turning on Mrs. Getit, she poured forth words and phrases, almost meaningless to herself, like a torrent of stagnant water that has been dammed up and suddenly set free. Her words came tumbling and rushing out with fiery turbulence. All the choicest of her mother’s vile language came to her aid in denouncing this woman.

It was the last time she was ever known to use an unseemly word. It was as if, on this occasion, she vomited forth and for ever got rid of all the evil nastiness that had been forcibly grafted on her memory, through her terrible associations, from infancy.

Then, as if the devil, that was being cast out of her, was making one final effort to rend her, she suddenly pounced on Mrs. Getit, who was trembling at the girl’s fury like an aspen leaf. Mr. Maeker made a bolt for the door and cleared off as fast as his old legs would carry him. Cheeky seized hold of the landlady’s dress at the shoulders and, with demon-like strength, tore the front clean out, right down to the waist, and, catching her by the hair with one hand, struck her with clenched fist on the face.

Mrs. Getit cried “Murder! Police!”

No one stirred, and when she got free, she ran into the now empty billiard-room and sobbed hysterically.

The young barmaid, with eyes on the ceiling and arms extended, stamped her foot and exclaimed, “The last bar ever I enter, so help me God!” Then she turned, picked up her hat and cloak, and went out.

Senior had gone to bed that night early, feeling a strange lassitude. He tried to read, but this he only succeeded in doing mechanically, the words conveying to

his mind no meaning. His thoughts continually reverted to the little girl who had been in his room that day. He again felt her cheek touch his, he again felt the warmth of her kiss. He laid the book down, closed his eyes, and tried to drop off to sleep.

For a long time this was denied him, through the activity of his brain; he could not banish Cheeky from his thoughts. At length he dosed off into a light, restless slumber.

Suddenly he was aroused by a sharp rap at his door, and he started into sitting posture, trembling with nervousness, his face flushing feverishly.

"Who is there?" he asked in a husky and uncertain voice.

The door opened and Cheeky walked in, pale and quivering with excitement. She shut the door noiselessly, then took up a position in the centre of the room and gazed at Senior. Her hair had become loosened in the struggle, and hung in disorder about her face and shoulders, giving her the appearance of a young maiden just about to disrobe before retiring to rest. The room was in darkness, save for one solitary gleam of moonlight that stole its way in between the edge of the drawn blind and the window sash, and lit up a narrow strip of the wall close to the head of the bed.

Senior did not feel surprised when she entered, and now a sweet, guilty joy thrilled his heart, as if some secret wish had been granted.

She did not wait for him to question her, but, coming closer, quickly narrated the details of all that had just taken place in the "New Dug-out," and the utter discomfiture of Mrs. Getit and Mr. Maeker.

"Well," Senior said, after expressing sympathy and commendation, "I'll get up at once and dress, and I'll go and look for a room for you to-night. To-morrow we shall see what is best to be done. You go outside and wait for me in the passage; and don't make any noise, or else you'll wake old Frilling—she sleeps next door, you know. We must hurry up. Why, it is half-past twelve!" he added, as he looked at his watch, which he drew from under his pillow.

The girl walked to the door—he anxiously watched her. She locked it and put the key into her pocket.

He felt strangely glad—then she came and knelt by his bedside, and in faltering accents said, “Jack, dear kind Jack! oh, please don’t send me away. Let me stay for ever with you. Let me be your little girl and work for you, I won’t want any money. I can never go into a bar again, never. It is all your fault, too, so you must not scold me. It was the way you spoke to me that did it; and oh, I do so want to be a good woman, just like your sister, and you will show me the way, won’t you? Let me live with you, and I’ll be true to you all my life, as sure as death I will.” Here she passed her hand solemnly across her throat.

In Cheeky’s mind the highest pinnacle of virtue any woman could attain was to be true to one man. Marriage to her was but a costly, superfluous ceremony, indulged in by rich folk for the sake of showing off pretty dresses and having a dance. She had never known the fond and all-absorbing care of a good mother. She had a heart that yearned for sympathy; in it was a void, long empty, that thirsted to be filled. Now that the intense heat of her late passion had burnt itself out, she felt utterly helpless and weak. She must have the moral support of this young man, who had been the cause of the new awakening. She had learnt to love him, and the love of this poor little waif, who had been cradled in vice, was at this moment as pure and unalloyed as the earliest drop of Heaven’s morning dew. All the best and highest of human nature was awakened now in her bosom. She was ardently longing for the better life—as yet to her as undefinable as the sun when the first faint streak of dawn precedes it—but, conscious of her weakness and her ignorance, she instinctively sought someone to lean upon, someone to guide her.

Senior felt sorely troubled. He experienced a guilty shamefaced feeling. He realised to the fullest extent the great natural good, the fine rich soil that only wanted cultivating. He understood the promptings and yearnings for the higher life that he, with a few casual careless words and with no special object, had called into existence. But the soft beauty of the girl’s face filled his soul, and drew him on to sin like an all-powerful magnet. His heart was a kindly one, his nature sympathetic. All the influences of his education, the early surroundings and associations of the comparatively pure country life he had led,

now invaded his mind, and strove to make him act honestly and honourably.

Though cynical he was also somewhat chivalrous and idealistic. The subtlest thoughts filled his brain. Marriage was but a form after all. Was it wrong to live and love together according to natural laws? He felt his moral sense of right and wrong swayed to and fro like a reed in the wind. Everything seemed to him in confusion; he was only conscious of a passion that was trying to make all subservient to it; and yet even this, with his sense of justice, he tried to discount, thus to make allowance for its warping his judgment. He talked to her long and earnestly. It was like a father-confessor with a humble penitent. He used all the skill of argument he was possessed of in trying to point out to the girl the wrong she wished to commit, and also how the world would look upon it; but withal a hope lay underneath that his words would have no effect. To make full peace with his conscience in the event of failure, he even assumed anger, and commanded her to leave his room, but he dreaded greatly lest she should obey him.

The girl heard, though she did not understand his arguments, and when the seemingly angry voice struck her ear she commenced to sob deeply.

The one soft, silvery ray of the sympathetic moon that invaded the chamber rested on her head and shoulders like a halo. In pleading childish tones mingled with sobs she exclaimed, "Please don't send me away! Oh, please don't. I want to be good, I want to be good!"

She placed her hands together as would a child in its devotions; the large tears slowly coursing down her cheeks. She prayed—in her ignorance—to be permitted to sin so as to escape sin.

Senior was but a poor weak human being after all.

CHAPTER XII.

MAY LESLIE sold her jewelry for £2,000. She had parted with it with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure. The loss of her treasures was in itself a great grief, but the sacrifice had been made for the man who had taught her how to love, and to whom was due the exquisite happiness of the novelty.

She began to form plans for an extensive illicit trade in diamonds.

Shortly after the sale of her gems an idea suggested itself to her by a visit from one of Kimberley's most celebrated detectives, Foxnisky. He called one evening after dark and inquired for Searight, well knowing that that gentleman was busy playing pool in the billiard-room of the Central Hotel. May Leslie felt some alarm—what could he want with her lover? She invited him in. He came in and sat down.

This man was of the medium height, slender, but wiry in build, in age about four-and-thirty. He had keen black eyes set in a dark half Italian, half English face. He was vain, and not unjustly, of his personal appearance.

They talked about the weather, then the different mines, and from the latter drifted easily into the subject of I.D.B., and how the new Act was working. Foxnisky jocularly told her that she would have to look after her young man, he had heard that Searight had been rather foolish; people required some experience, some nous, before they were good at judging the value of diamonds.

May Leslie thought, "So you have heard about the stone he sold to that cackling fool Faganstine: forewarned is forearmed."

Then the detective began talking about Mosetenstine. "Ah, he is a smart fellow; he is, beyond a doubt, the biggest and cleverest illicit in Kimberley."

May Leslie commenced to think she could see which way the wind was blowing.

"Excuse me, Miss Leslie, but, do you know? I always looked upon you as not only the prettiest girl in Kimberley, but as one of the smartest. I cannot understand—you'll excuse me, won't you?—how you chucked up

such a clever, rich, generous fellow as Ikey for a hard-up ne'er-do-well, who gambles away every penny he can get hold of."

May Leslie replied, "Well, you see, Ikey was not so kind to me as you imagine. He made my life a perfect misery. I couldn't speak to a soul, he was so terribly jealous. I got to hate him at last; I never did like him; and one night, because Searight happened to be in the sitting-room with me when he came home, he kicked up a terrible fuss afterwards, lost his temper, and struck me in the face. I did not say a word, but just looked at him, and then walked straight out of the house. Oh, he sent for me, wrote to me, apologised most humbly, begged of me to return, but, no thank you, not after that. Why, I could not stand such a thing from the best man that ever stood, no matter how much I cared for him, let alone from a low, ugly brute I detested. No, no, not for Joe!"

"Well, I reckon you find a difference now. I don't suppose poor Searight is overflush?"

"No, he is not; but almost daily we expect to hear of the death of an uncle of his who is over ninety, and is now ailing, not expected to recover in fact. He leaves Searight about £15,000."

Foxnisky smiled incredulously.

"Oh, yes, it is a fact, though. I have seen all his home correspondence. Believe me, he could not bluff *me*. But at present we are a bit pressed for the needful; perhaps you, Mr. Foxnisky, might be willing to do a little loan, eh?" May Leslie laughed merrily.

"And do you really dislike Ikey?" the detective asked.

"Dislike the beast?" May Leslie replied, as she assumed a fierce, vindictive look; "I could kill him!"

"I know of a way in which you could pay him out, and pay yourself in at the same time. You know what I mean?"

She shook her head doubtfully.

Foxnisky produced his pocket-book, wrote something down, then tore out the leaf and handed it to her. May Leslie read, "£1,000, and half value of seizure."

"I can guarantee that, you know; you can always take our word for anything of the kind, it would not pay us not to act straight."

May Leslie put the paper in her pocket, nodded her head, and smiled encouragingly at him to proceed.

"What do you say? you could fix him up; you could easily go back to him. He is terribly fond of you, I know. I don't wonder at it either; who wouldn't be?"

May Leslie smiled pleasantly, bowed ironically, as she answered, "Thank you, Mr. Foxnisky, but you are good at compliments. I'm afraid you are, like most good-looking men, sadly spoilt, and in return try to spoil people yourself. But now, you see, I'm awkwardly placed. I am engaged to be married to Mr. Searight; then, again, there is that 'beauty' with the flaxen hair, Miss Jones, staying with Ikey now, though if it were not for the other reason I could soon shunt her. I'll tell you; just give me, say, ten days, to think over it, and I'll see how it could best be managed. Oh, you need not be afraid of my opening my lips to a single soul, not even Searight; ah, believe me, a woman can keep a secret much better than a man."

Foxnisky laughed, and after paying her some more compliments regarding both her looks and her cleverness, he took his departure, promising to return in ten days' time.

Now, a little scheme had already presented itself to May Leslie. She sent a note to Mosetenstine, requesting him to come at once. Fortunately, he was at home when the missive arrived, and he lost no time in getting into a Cape cart and driving round to Lennox Street. As he entered the cottage his heart beat rapidly from the excitement produced by the hopes May Leslie's sudden invitation had caused. He expected to find her penitent. His late mistress had no doubt found that love in a cottage was but empty after all, and most probably wished him to take her back.

May Leslie's sad looks encouraged this idea. "Ikey," she said softly, as she held out her hand to him, "Ikey, come in, sit down on the sofa. You have been very good and kind to me," she went on after the I.D.B. was seated, "and I repaid you with ingratitude."

"Ah, I thought so, she has found out her mistake," mentally ejaculated Mosetenstine.

"Just fancy," she went on. "they have been to me this morning and have tried to get me to trap you."

"Vat?" exclaimed the other.

"Yes, Ikey. Ah, me! I have done you enough injury

already, they must think I am indeed a low wretch. Here, look at that, do you know that handwriting?" She handed him the page that the detective had torn out of his pocket-book. She had added a nought to the figures, so that it now read, "£10,000 and half value of seizure."

Mosetenstine looked at the paper, and he exclaimed, "Dat writing? Vy, dat is dat scoundrel Foxnisky's writing, dere is no mishtake about dat."

"Well, I'll tell you all about it," said May Leslie. "When he came here this morning I could not make out what he was driving at. He talked about all kinds of things. Then he spoke about I.D.B., and commenced to talk about you. I immediately smelt a rat, so to draw him out I told him a fearful lot of lies about you—that you ill-treated me, and God knows what I did not say you did to me."

"Oh, May, vy you say dat; vas I not kind to you?" Ikey broke in.

"Yes, of course you were, have I not said so? But, don't you see, I wanted to find out what he was after. Well, then, as I expected, he proposed to me to trap you, and promised me, if successful, the amount on that piece of paper—£10,000, and half value of diamond seizure—should be my reward. Why, he wrote it down in his pocket-book, and tore the page out and gave it me. Now, then!"

Ikey Mosetenstine turned quite yellow with fear as he thought of the enormous amount offered for his capture, the largest reward he had ever heard of for the trapping of an I.D.B. For such a sum of money, why they would swear away his life. He stammered out: "Horrible! ain't it?" and then he looked at May Leslie intently.

She proceeded: "You see, Ikey, they have got an idea—you know how things get exaggerated—that you have no less than three hundred boys planted in the claims, who are engaged by you to bring all the stones they find; so the different companies have agreed to guarantee a sum of £10,000 to anyone who will trap you, besides, mind you, a big bonus to the detectives. Foxnisky told me that it was by far and away the largest amount ever offered for such a capture, but of course you know you are the biggest man in the trade. Oh, yes, they have made up their minds to catch you at any cost. Foxnisky

proposed that I should go back to you, and—what do you think—and pretend I was sorry, and, if it could be managed in no other way, slip a stone into your pocket. And, after giving them the tip, you were to be searched—well—you know the rest.”

“Oh! de dem scoundrel! Yust look at dat now, and den dey zay dat de trapping is straight.”

“Now, Ikey, there is only one thing for you to do—they are bound to have you if you stay here—you must leave the country for a while; go to England and give them time to get you out of their minds. Oh, dear Ikey, you must really, I feel so anxious about you.”

Mosetenstine almost forgot his alarm at this new development of tenderness on the part of his ex-mistress. All the old feelings of infatuation commenced to creep over him again. He replied: “Vell, May, yes, I vill go, but you must come mit me; yes, you come, and I vill go as quick as de shod from de gun.”

“Oh, Ikey,” she replied sorrowfully, “I cannot—you don’t know—please don’t ask me—but when you come out again, perhaps— Oh, Ikey, I used to be so happy.” Here she wiped her eyes. The I.D.B. tried to put his arm round her, but she kept him off with one hand as she pointed to the bedroom-door with the other as if enjoining discretion. “You must go now, Ikey, but promise me you will leave at once.”

“Oh, I must tink over it, I am so frightened, an’ I dono vedder I stand on mine head or my feets. Oh, my, vat a sad vorld it is, isn’t it so?” He then took his leave, looking most wretched.

Ikey Mosetenstine had been fortunate in securing the services of the most accomplished and yet most reliable Kaffir thief on the Diamond Fields when he first entered upon the trade. To this boy, Charlie, a Basuto, he owed even more of his enormous success as an illicit diamond buyer than to his own undoubted astuteness. The tact, the cunning, the energy of the dusky rascal, were marvelous. Charlie was a “Christian nigger”—a term applied to civilized and converted Kaffirs. He had been educated at a mission station in his native land, but, like many South African blacks who enjoy this wholesome and beneficial influence, he had turned his privileges to but poor account, at least so far as honesty was concerned.

Besides English and Cape-Dutch he could speak fluently all the different Kaffir dialects known on the Fields. He had rather a good tenor voice, which the missionaries had taken no little pains to cultivate for choir purposes. And he was a proficient concertina player. These accomplishments, added to his undoubted trustworthiness as an I.D.B. tout, made him invaluable to Ikey. Besides being popular with the many Kaffirs with whom it was his business to come into contact, he was also feared by them, being credited with supernatural powers. His master, who excelled as an amateur conjurer, had taught him some legerdemain tricks in order to increase his attractions in the eyes of the Blacks. There was little fear of treachery on the part of the natives engaged by him to steal for his baas, the dread of the terrible consequences being too great.

May Leslie, having taken quite an active part in Mosetenstine's illicit business, fully recognised the inestimable qualities of the Basuto. If she could only secure his services, everything would be made easy. It was quite useless, she knew, to try and get him to leave his master. Unlike most Kaffirs he was a marvel of faithfulness; not even her beauty, her softest words, and finest presents, would be sufficient to sever his allegiance.

Charlie had conceived a great and venerable admiration for his "Meesis," as he called her, and not a week passed but he came to pay his respects. He used to come round by the yard entrance to the kitchen door and call out loudly, "Meesis! my Meesis!" and when she appeared on the scene he would bow low, and laugh heartily in a high falsetto key. "When the Meesis coming back?" he would ask, and May Leslie would always reply, "Never, Charlie, never," which would cause him to shake his head slowly and dolefully murmur, "So, so, so!"

May Leslie, with an eye to business, usually gave him, when he came, some little present that she knew he would prize for its own sake.

Charlie paid her a visit shortly after his master had been there, and he found his "Meesis" apparently in great trouble. She sighed, and frequently applied her handkerchief to her eyes. "Oh, Charlie, Charlie!" she exclaimed, "I am in great trouble; I don't know what I am going to do. Oh, dear! oh, dear! what shall I do?"

The boy became quite sympathetic. "My Meesis!" he said, "what is the matter? Can Charlie help the Meesis?"

"Yes, you could if you liked," she replied, "but I don't think you will."

Charlie's feelings were hurt; he expressed his willingness to do anything in his power for her.

"Well, you see, Charlie, it is like this," she broke in; "I must send a message to a gentleman in Bloemfontein, in the Free State, before a week's time, or else I shall lose all the money I have in the wide world. I cannot write to him by the post, as there is one I know watching to steal my letter; so as the gentleman wouldn't get it, I must get someone to take a letter for me straight to the gentleman himself."

Charlie laughed, and then said, "Is that all? Why Charlie take the letter for the Meesis. Charlie will ask the master, and he let me go quick."

"No, but, Charlie, that is just what I don't want you to do. I cannot explain to you, but I do not want your master, or anyone else, to know what you are going for, or where you are going to."

"But then Charlie won't tell him," said the boy; "Charlie must ask for some holiday."

"No, that won't do either. I can't tell you why, but you would just have to go off without saying a word to anyone, not even your master."

The boy was non-plussed. This was entirely beyond his comprehension. Why could he not ask to go away for a few days? He could make some excuse.

May Leslie, seeing him thus undecided, began sobbing.

The boy's heart melted at once. "Charlie will go for the Meesis," he said, "and not say nothing to master at all—not tell him Charlie is going."

"Oh, Charlie, can I trust you?"

The Basuto shrugged his shoulders, but never said a word. Such a question, in his opinion, needed no answer. It was then arranged that he was to proceed on the morrow to Bloemfontein with a letter that he was to deliver into the hands of Mr. Cecil Percival, the proprietor of the Phoenix Hotel. He was to take the greatest care that no one else passing himself off as that person should get this missive, and he was not to return without an answer from the gentleman in question. May Leslie

judged he ought to be back in a week's time at most. She minutely described the proprietor of the Phoenix Hotel so that no mistake could be made.

Mr. Cecil Percival had been a member of the dramatic troupe which May Leslie left to take a bar in Kimberley. They had been friendly enough, and at this moment he was the only one at a convenient distance of whom she could make use in getting rid of Charlie for a few days to enable her to carry out her plans. She wired first to ascertain if he were still at Bloemfontein, and being answered in the affirmative, she wrote and told him that for very grave reasons—she would explain afterwards—it was necessary for her to get a certain Kaffir out of the way for some little time, and as Mr. Percival was an old friend, one on whose discretion she could implicitly rely, she was taking the liberty of sending this boy to him on a pretended message. He was on no account to let him return until she wired or wrote to that effect. She enclosed a five-pound-note for any expenses which might be incurred.

Two days after Charlie had gone, May Leslie sent again for Mosetenstine. When he came she asked him what his intentions were, to remain and get "run in," or be wise, and go to England for a trip out of harm's way?

"Vell," replied Ikey, "I can't makes up my mind. Zometimes I tink I go, and zometimes I tink I stay. You zee Charlie does all de buying for me, as you knows. If I vent away, vy, I vould lose all my connection, perhaps."

Then she broke in, "Look here, Ikey, don't be a fool. Foxnisky was here again to-day, and I agreed to trap you, and he believes that I am acting straight with him. Now he tells me that he has got hold of your boy Charlie, and is paying him tremendously high wages as a trap, but that he cannot get him to consent to trap you, and he wants me to use my influence to persuade him."

"It is von dam lie!" Ikey broke out. "Vy, Charlie, I trust mine life wid him, he never leave me. Ah, I go and zee him dis moment." And seizing his hat he rushed out.

Next day he came back to May Leslie with crestfallen countenance. He had not been able to find the boy, and no one had seen him for two or three days. Mosetenstine was heartbroken. Everybody was turning against him.

Only last night he discovered that Miss Jones had been untrue to him; and how had May herself treated him after all his kindness? This Charlie, too, whom he had always looked upon as being faithful as any dog, had likewise deserted him; and what could he do now without him? It was Charlie who planted the Kaffirs in the claims to steal for him. He himself did not know one nigger from the other. When a diamond was found by one of the natives in his service it was Charlie who brought the boy to him, and, when a price was agreed upon, it was this cunning Basuto who took the Kaffir some distance away and gave the money in exchange for the stolen gem, thereby minimising all dangers to his baas. Although the tout had shown that he had some spark of feeling left by refusing to trap his master, still how greatly he was disappointed in him. Was there not a single person in the world that could be relied upon? No, he believed there was not. And, through the desertion of Charlie, he should lose the services of all the Kaffirs who had hitherto been working for him. It was indeed hard. The tears trickled down his cheeks. He would not run the risk of the only alternative now left him, to buy from white men, with such a reward held out for his capture. The only thing he could do was, as May Leslie suggested, to take a trip to England, and then come out again to start afresh with renewed energy.

May Leslie looked on with scorn at the pitiable grief of this notorious I.D.B. How could she ever have been base enough, she wondered, to have lived with this ugly, snivelling little wretch? She felt she would like to kick him out of the house as she would a mongrel cur. Love had worked wonders for her, she owned. What a different woman she was now!

"Poor Ikey," she said, in a kindly tone of sympathy, "I feel so much for you. You have indeed been badly treated all round the show. But for heaven's sake, for my sake, do go away from this country for some time—but not too long, Ikey dear. They certainly mean to have you by fair means or foul. Can you trust this beauty, Miss Jones? Can you trust anybody you have around you? The servant girl, the stable boy, the cook? You are at the mercy of any of them. £10,000 is a big thing—why, it is a fortune! How many could be got to take away a person's life

for a sum like that, let alone just to put a small stone in one of your pockets, or even in a box or bag of yours. You know the new law about illegal possession. You are well-known to be in the trade. You could swear as much as you liked that you did not know how the stuff came there. Would you be believed, do you think? No, you would get, at the very least, ten years on the breakwater in Cape Town. Ikey, it would kill you. You are too delicate; you could not stand it. Just imagine you amongst a lot of Kaffirs with chains on, a pick or a shovel in your hand, working away for ten long years, and getting nothing to live on but bread-and-water. Your money, too, they would confiscate, would they not?"

Ikey sobbed aloud at this terrible picture. In his dire distress he craved for sympathy and support. He rose suddenly and threw his arms around May Leslie, and cried out: "Vat zal I do? tell me, help me, mine dearest gal. Come mit me, an' you vill have halef mine money, an' everyt'ing I got. You must come! May, zay you vill come!"

May Leslie experienced, as she was clasped in this man's embrace, a feeling as if some loathsome reptile had wound its coils round her; but, with an effort, she prevented herself from showing the strong repugnance.

"My poor, dear Ikey," she said, in a compassionate voice, "let go of me; I want to speak to you. Now do! I cannot go with you now, but when you reach home I will write to you, do you understand? Now, don't ask me anything, Ikey, but take my word; there, now, promise me that you will go at once, not only to Cape Town, as I know you would be only tempted back, but to England. If you only knew how terribly anxious I am about you, you would go if only for my sake." Then, assuming a far-off look, she exclaimed, in a dramatic tone: "There, I see you—always working with shovel in hand, the perspiration streaming from your forehead; chains, heavy chains, on your arms and legs; the broad arrow on your back; the guards standing close to you with rifle in hand. Many's the time my mother has told me that I had the gift of second sight. Oh! I hope it is not coming true; I hope it is not coming true!" She shuddered and covered her face, as if to keep the awful vision out.

Ikey Mosetenstine was now fully convinced, and he

exclaimed: "I will go! I swear I will go at once, and by the first coach."

"Leave me now," she said; "I expect Searight back every moment; go, dear Ikey."

The I.D.B. was but small in size, ill-formed, and ugly; he held up his face like a child for a farewell kiss. May Leslie, actress as she was, now required every little atom of self-command to force herself to do what she had so often done before and thought nothing of. She stooped down and touched his forehead with her lips. And Mosetenstine took his departure, too much moved to utter another word.

In due time Charlie returned to Kimberley with the answer to May Leslie's letter. The latter informed him that his master had suddenly left for England, owing to some important news. It was Mr. Mosetenstine's wish that until his return Charlie was to remain with her, and try and keep the Kaffirs together.

The Basuto believed her, and was perfectly satisfied.

May Leslie thus achieved the two first great steps towards a successful career as an illicit diamond buyer. She had secured not only the sharpest "tout" in the Diamond Fields, but also, through him, the services of upwards of seventy well-trained Kaffir thieves already planted on the claims and depositing-floors of the different companies.

Ikey Mosetenstine having left with her a special power of attorney to deal with his fine house and grand furniture in Du Toits Pan Road as she might think best, she decided that she and Searight should take up their quarters there, and so have everything under her own supervision.

CHAPTER XIII.

Nor a cloud was in the heavens as Leonard, his day's work over, stood in the doorway of his little iron shanty in Du Toits Pan, looking out. The short-lived twilight of the Southern Hemisphere was quickly fleeting, and the air of the winter's evening grew momentarily more cold.

The deep blue of the African sky had faded to its most delicate shade, meeting and mingling with the last rays of the setting sun, and together with them producing soft tints of a luminous grey. Then it merged into a lambent pink, which gradually deepened in roseate hues, until at the meeting of the earth a rich amber flame glowed, causing to stand out, in sharp outline on the horizon, the flat-topped Kopje, behind which the sun had sunk.

There was a murmur of the voices of Kaffirs returning from their work to their locations. Now and again the stillness would be further broken by the deep chant of a war-song.

It was a beautiful evening, the clerk reflected, and not having seen Senior for some time he decided to drive up to Kimberley, and endeavour to get his friend to come for a walk.

Reaching the "Albion" he opened the door as usual without knocking, and went in. Much to his astonishment he saw Cheeky, evidently very much at home, sitting on a chair, mending some of Senior's linen; whilst the latter watched her placidly, and smoked his pipe with an air of contentment. Numerous dresses, hats, etc., hanging on the pegs round the wall opened Leonard's eyes to the state of affairs. Cheeky did not seem in the least put out at the entrance of Senior's friend, but with a kindly smile of welcome got up and held out her hand to him. Senior, however, he plainly saw, felt ill at ease, and before very long, Leonard was asked by him to come for a little walk; he had some little business matters on which he wanted the clerk's advice.

"You won't mind, Cheeky, will you?" he said, addressing the girl. "We won't be long, just a few minutes, I promise you."

"All right, Jack, but please don't be too long away," she replied.

Senior told his young friend the whole story; about the row Cheeky had with Mrs. Getit, and how she had come to his room the same night. When he had concluded, he asked the other what he should advise him to do.

"Well," returned Leonard after a pause, "I'll just tell you what I think. If you could afford the luxury I should say you were devilish lucky in getting hold of such a pretty, interesting little girl, and one who, if I'm not mis-

taken, is really, up to the present, fond of you ; but Jack, unfortunately, you can *not* afford such extravagances, however delightful. In the first place you are out of a billet, and I suppose you have none too much cash by this time. Another thing, you have nothing definite in view. Anyhow, you are a useless kind of beggar, you have neither trade nor profession. Sooner or later you will have to part with her, so the sooner the better. I don't suppose you would ever think of marrying a girl like that, and even if you were ass enough, you couldn't afford it. You are not what is termed a man of the world. No, you are, what I call, 'a good sort of a chap'—another name for a fool! You could not bring yourself to do anything heartless. You are of too affectionate a nature to run any risks of getting entangled with a woman. Take my tip for it, get rid of her at once, right on the pop, before you get into a worse mess."

Senior was silent for a few minutes. He recognised the truth of all this, but how was he to put this good advice into practice? Where could Cheeky go, and what could she now do for a living? A bar he knew she would not enter, nor would he like her to. To send her down to her mother would be a case of "out of the frying-pan into the fire." The many obstacles that presented themselves in solving the problem of how to get rid of Cheeky in a desirable way—one which, in all events, would be for her own good—caused Senior to experience no little gladness, since these obstacles prevented any immediate sacrifice on his part. Senior was, as his friend Leonard had said, of an affectionate nature. In his lifetime he had formed but few attachments, but he was large-hearted and impressionable, and capable of true love and fidelity. The loneliness and helplessness of the little girl in her sudden distaste for the life she had been leading, stirred in him a real sympathy. Her respect for him, almost amounting to veneration, pleased his vanity, and her fondness awoke a responsive echo. With a feeling akin to shame he was conscious of a selfish desire that no feasible plan of bettering Cheeky's position should offer itself so as to necessitate their separation.

"Yes," he said, at length, "Lennie, you are right ; but tell me how it is to be done?"

The other suggested in turn the girl's going into another

bar, a more respectable one than the last, or on the stage, domestic service, trying to get her as a nurse into a hospital, but all, when discussed in detail, appeared to be impracticable.

"I must think over it very carefully," Senior said. "One must not be in too much of a hurry in a thing of this kind; it is indeed a most serious matter." To which the other replied, "Yes, it is all very well speaking like that, but the longer you delay, the harder it will become to decide."

"Now, Leonard," Senior broke in, "tell me what you would have done had you been in my place?"

"I? Why I should undoubtedly have done the same as you, and probably given in much quicker. But come now, Jack, look at it from a common-sense point of view, isn't this affair likely to get you into no end of a mess?"

"Well, I don't know, but I was not meaning in that way. Look at it from a moral point of view. Do you know, I cannot help thinking that I have behaved rather like an outsider in the affair. It seems so mean after my preaching morality and all that sort of thing, and getting the girl to hate all the beastliness that goes on in the bar, to be the very first to take advantage of her innocence, or ignorance, if you like to call it. You know I might easily have prevented it, if I had struggled very hard. I tried to deceive myself that I was doing my best, but I know very well I didn't. As far as Cheeky is concerned she did no wrong, not a bit. She is quite ignorant of the world's prejudices in such matters. She thinks that instead of having done wrong, she has done the reverse. But suppose now I had persuaded her to go out with me, and get a room at some hotel that night, what was to have eventually become of her? It is a puzzle, isn't it? Poor little Cheeky! 'where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.' You know you can't expect anything else of her. Her mother, she tells me—well, perhaps I should not repeat! Of religion she knows simply nothing. She has very vague ideas about the whole thing. I bet you she could not tell you who our Saviour was, I mean—of course, your People don't believe in His divinity, and no more do I—I mean what Christians profess to believe Him to have been. As far as I am concerned, I really am no admirer of what people call the sanctity of marriage, for is not the whole thing too often a farce! Mothers sell their daughters to men for

wealth or social position, and the daughters themselves are usually too willing to be bartered. In nine cases out of ten a woman will accept the first offer she gets, whether she cares for the man or no, afraid of not getting another chance. What is that but a sale of her body made legal? Yet society, which would utterly condemn poor little Cheeky for what she has done, and treat her as an abandoned wretch, looks up to a girl who makes what is termed a good match, even though it knows that, as far as she is concerned, there is no love in the affair. Good, conscientious Christians countenance these marriages of convenience. This sort of thing has been the custom so long that people have come to think it is what it should be. That is what it is: whatever is is right! No one seems to analyse anything. In my humble opinion, Cheeky is virtuous and highly moral compared to any woman—yes, even if she has been true to her marriage vows—who has married a man she cares nothing about, simply because he is willing to give her wealth or a comfortable home. Why, that May Leslie who left Mosetenstine for Searight is to my idea less immoral. She at least made no bones about the matter, but had the courage to sell herself openly and without any pretence, cant, or hypocrisy. What terrible humbug is the whole thing!"

Senior was young and only partially educated, and though he expressed these heterodox views but poorly, still, to do him justice, he was not trying in any way to excuse himself for what he had done, but spoke simply as he had thought for some time.

Leonard entirely condemned his friend's ideas. "It is all very well, Johnnie, my boy," concluded the magistrate's clerk, "for you to air your tin-pot notions about marriage being a farce and all that kind of thing, but the line must be drawn somewhere. Society must have certain regulations, certain rules laid down. It is quite possible that those that are made are open to amendment; but is there any one law, any one thing, in fact, that works perfectly smoothly in every particular? What a fine thing it would be if it were considered right for every silly young girl to follow the bent of a passing fancy for every fellow! No; the old folks have lived longer, and in many cases, too, have had to pay for their experience. Why should not the mother look out for the welfare of her child?

Your grand ideas about love are all very well, but fondness for a husband who does not possess a cent won't go far towards buying the baby a frock. Men, with more than twice the brains of you and me put together, have believed in marriage. It is undoubtedly a safeguard to society. How, for instance, would you like a sister of yours to put your theories into practice?"

"I should not like it at all, of course."

"Ah! there you are! You have only to bring the thing home to yourself and you can see the absurdity of it."

"I don't see it; if it were the general custom I should not object, but it not being so, my sister would, in that case, suffer from the prejudices of others. However, I don't want to argue any more about it, you don't seem to get at my meaning. What I wished to ask you was, what you thought about my share in the business—I mean with Cheeky, you know? Do you think I have been much to blame?"

"Well," replied the other, "according to the highest moral code, you have; but anyone else in your place would have done the same. Done the same? Why, ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have been only too glad of the chance, no matter what the consequences would be to the girl. You come across Josephs in books, especially those written by women, but, though only a youngster, I have knocked about pretty considerably, and I have never met one yet. Anyhow, I expect Mrs. Potiphar was old, and probably ugly; Cheeky is young and attractive; that makes all the difference, you know."

Senior's face brightened a little as he replied, "Yes, 'tis so. You are perfectly right." But though his friend's cynical and sweeping assertion had made his conscience feel easier, he could not, however, help seeing the injustice of it. "No, Leonard," he resumed, though in rather a mild tone, "you are wrong. There are men who, had they been in my place, would not have done the same."

They were now close to the "Albion." Cheeky had been standing at the door waiting their return. When she caught sight of them she ran to them and, like a little child, without reserve, threw her arms round Senior's neck and kissed him.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW days later Cheeky was surprised one morning by a visit from the landlady. She had conceived a great disgust and detestation for this woman, who, for the first few days after she had taken up her quarters with Senior, insisted on caressing and kissing her on every opportunity, pretending to look upon her as a child, until at last Cheeky lost patience, and administered to her a sound box on the ear, since when Mrs. Frilling had left her unmolested.

Senior had gone out for a walk, and the young girl was busy tidying up the room, singing like a lark, she was so happy, when in walked the landlady, calmly seating herself on a chair.

"Good morning, deary," she said; but the girl took no notice, anxious to let the woman see that her presence was by no means welcome.

Mrs. Frilling praised her smartness, her tidiness, her gaiety, and then commenced to pay the most fulsome compliments as to the beauty of her face and figure.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "if I was only like you—so young, and the prettiest girl in Kimberley—it would not be me, though it is I 'oo says it, that would be cleaning up a room, like a common black Kaffir, for any young man, no matter if diamonds grew in 'is 'ead, that I wouldn't! Let alone for one as is got no money. No; not when there is lots of men, and rich ones, too, a-sighing and a-dying for—"

The girl here became impatient. "Oh, for goodness sake, give us a rest! Who are you getting at? Look here, do clear out; I want to get my room done, as I'm going out."

"Oh, dearie, don't be angry with me! if you only knowed 'ow I loved you, you would not be so cross with me, dearie. I've news for you, and good news, too; they might be a lot worser, I can tell you."

The young girl, broom in hand, stopped, and, looking at her inquiringly, said, "News! what news?"

The landlady, who was still in *deshabille*, having on only a petticoat and shawl, cocked her head to one side, and smiled knowingly as she exposed her yellow fangs and false teeth.

"Ah," she replied, "what about a fine 'ouse, a trap and pair of 'osses and servants of your hown? Ah, you are very saucy and cross to me, dearie! but I 'ave been looking hout for you. Says I to myself, says I, 'A nice pretty little girl like that deserves somethink better nor living in the "Albion," cooped up in one small room.' Yes; Aaron Jaco, the richest bloke in Hafrica, told me to hask you if you would be his 'ousekeeper, and he says as he will give ye fifty golden sovereigns a month. There now! and it was me as put you in 'is 'ead."

Cheeky had listened attentively, but had never offered to say one word. When the landlady, who had now assumed the air of one who has done something really very good and generous, had finished, the girl said ironically:

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Frilling! Will you tell the gentleman to come for his answer when Mr. Senior is at home?" And then, lifting her broom in an attitude of attack, she cried: "And as for you, you ugly old wretch, clear out this moment!"

Mrs. Frilling darted for the door, exclaiming as she went, in accents of great surprise, "Well, I never! Did you hever? This young girl must surely be wrong in the 'ead. She treats this offer as if it were dirt under her feet."

When Senior came home Cheeky informed him of the offer Aaron Jaco had made her through Mrs. Frilling, and of the answer she had given. He was bitterly annoyed.

"We must look for more respectable lodgings at once," he said. "There is no use in saying anything to Mrs. Frilling about it. I suppose she really thought she was doing you a good turn, though I bet she was doing something for herself at the same time. I expect it was that beast, Jaco, who spoke first, and paid her, too, for her services. Anyhow, I'll give her notice to leave at the end of the week."

Senior and Cheeky had their meals alone in the sitting-room, for which privilege the former paid a pound a month extra. When Mrs. Frilling served lunch, Senior told her that he intended leaving at the end of the week; and he further desired her to tell Mr. Jaco that he should take the first opportunity of calling at that gentleman's office, and personally conveying an answer from Miss Smirker to his proposal.

The landlady longed to give the young man "the length of her tongue," but she observed the girl's eyes fixed on her, as it were, in desirous expectation that she should. She had heard of the severe trouncing Cheeky had given Mrs. Getit, so she discreetly remained silent.

That evening, Mrs. Frilling drove to Aaron Jaco's house to report to him the unexpected result of her negotiations.

Aaron Jaco was a young man about thirty, well built, strong, and of medium height. Although belonging to the Hebrew race, in features he did not much resemble those of the tribe of Judah. At the age of twenty he had begun life in South Africa in a humble way, but being a keen, sharp-sighted individual, he, with money carefully saved, bought some claims in the Kimberley mine, which he floated at the height of the scrip mania. Most of the shares that were allotted to him in part payment he got rid of at topmost prices, thus laying the nucleus of the largest fortune in South Africa. Aaron Jaco enjoyed amongst his co-religionists the name of being the "smartest" amongst them, not only in business, but also in fistic prowess. He laughed derisively when Mrs. Frilling, of course, exaggerating, told him of the threatened visit to his office, and the dreadful hammering Senior said he was going to give him. But an idea struck him—he was cunning, and he saw a way by which not only would he escape having a row, a thing always unpleasant, no matter which way it went, but also from which he might get no end of fun—dearly loving practical jokes when at the expense of others. He would engage Dooley, the prize-fighter, to act the part of his office servant for a few days, in case the young fellow did come round. Probably Senior, who was a late arrival on the Fields, did not know Dooley, and would resent the impudence he should put the latter up to giving the young fellow if he came round inquiring for him. A friend of his, by name Moss Brahim, happened to be dining with him; he told him, much to the latter's amusement, of his proposed little scheme, and out they went together to search for Dooley, whom they found at Carme's Billiard Saloon. Aaron Jaco called the pugilist aside, and explained fully what he wanted. He promised him a "fiver" a day as long as he was required to stay at the office, and a "tenner" extra if anything came off.

"All right, gov'nor," said Dooley, "I'm your Moses, I understand the game!"

Next day some curiosity was aroused amongst the diamond-dealing fraternity when Dooley was observed standing at Aaron Jaco's office door. The joke, however, was too good to keep, and gradually leaked out, and everyone got into a state of eager expectation and looked forward to witnessing the cunningly prepared surprise that was to happen to the young fellow.

Through the talk—they were a great gossiping lot in the Diamond Market—occasioned by the late fracas at the "New Dug Out," Senior had gained no little notoriety as the fellow with whom the prettiest barmaid in Kimberley had fallen madly in love. He was aware of a feeling akin to pride as he noticed himself pointed out, and overheard the remarks as to the girl's wonderful infatuation. Yes, notwithstanding their money, Cheeky preferred him to them all.

Senior had decided to say nothing to Aaron Jaco; who was he to cavil at others, when he had no intention of marrying the girl himself?

In the afternoon he went out, bent on trying to secure suitable lodgings. He did not observe all eyes following him as he was passing through the market. As he came to a well-known place of refreshment, "The Barnato Bar," he saw Mr. Stewart standing in the doorway. The latter hailing him, held out his hand and said, "Come, Senior, shake hands, I apologise. I was in the wrong; I own it. Say no more about it; but have a drink."

Senior felt quite moved at the old Scotchman's humble acknowledgment of the wrong he had done him. He liked his late employer, and now he felt glad to be once more on a footing of friendship with him. They chatted about things in general. During a pause in the conversation, Mr. Stewart broke in, "Oh, by-the-by, have you seen Aaron Jaco? No? Well, he told me if I saw you to be sure and tell you to come over to his office, as he was very anxious to talk to you about something. If I remember rightly, he said something about a misunderstanding you and he had, do you understand? Did you have any words about anything? No? But that is strange. I am almost sure he said that he was in the wrong about something, and he wanted to explain to you about the affair."

"Oh! I think I know what it is about," said Senior.

"Yes?" replied the other, "what is it about? Private? Oh, I beg your pardon; but you'd better run over. There is his office. He is in now, I think. Go on, and I'll wait for you here. I think I can put you on to something, not in the fighting line." Mr. Stewart here laughed heartily. "Oh, no, I have given that up as a bad job. Oh, yes, but run over, and I'll wait for you."

Mr. Stewart, being still idle, was in the habit of paying a daily visit to the market, which was looked upon as a respectable kind of loafer's resort. He, like the rest, had heard of the little joke that was put up for Senior. He rubbed his hands with glee. It was simply splendid. All the morning he had been in the highest spirits, laughing at almost nothing. He determined to aid the little plot as far as it lay in his power, hence, though Jaco had not spoken to him that day, he had invented the story of the millionaire's wishing to apologise. He did not see, either, why he should not profit in a pecuniary way by his judgment and knowledge. He had taken an astute young diamond-buyer, Rothel, into his confidence, and had commissioned him to back Senior to lick Dooley for as much money as he could get on. Rothel was to use discretion in betting, first to get as long odds as obtainable, then to come down in price gradually, and at the last moment, if necessary, to lay the odds; yes, even that the young fellow would defeat the great bruiser in less than fifteen minutes. Mr. Stewart took very good care to openly back Dooley for large sums with Rothel. They were, however, standing-in halves.

Senior, never suspecting the trap that was laid for him, went across to Aaron Jaco's office, which was almost opposite "The Barnato Bar." Dooley was standing at the door. The prize-fighter was a man of about thirty, five feet ten inches in height, of massive build, but much inclined to flesh. He had a small-featured, but rather good-looking face of a low type. The only marks of punishment received in his various battles were two deep scars under his left eye, and a thickening of the upper part of the left ear. By trade he was a brickmaker, and his hands looked abnormally large. Dooley was a brutal, bullying man, and, in his cups, a very fiend.

"Well," he said, as Senior came up to him, "what do

you want." When he spoke he continually winked the right eye, and twitched up the left corners of his mouth.

"Is Mr. Jaco in?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"I believe he wants to see me"—and Senior's face reddened.

"What should he want to see the likes of you for?"

A crowd, much to Senior's surprise, had already collected round the office. He replied in a frigid tone, "Kindly tell him that Mr. Senior is here."

"I'll do nothing of the kind. I have got horders that if any loafer comes a hasking for Mr. Jaco I'm to send 'im about his business, and if he don't sling 'is 'ook, why then I 'ave to make 'im."

Senior recognised and knew this prize fighter of villainous repute. Mr. Stewart, he thought, must have had something to do with this; it was probably put up for him to force him to fight. Well, he did not mind, so long as it was not a regular prize fight; and this man, who had insulted him grossly, had long deserved a good thrashing.

"You are Dooley, are you not?"

"Yes," the pugilist replied, disappointed that the other knew him. Now there would be no little "scrap," and the "tenner" would not be earned. "And," he went on, "if you don't Dooley hout of this double quick, I'll 'elp you with my foot."

The crowd gave vent to a murmur of disappointment, the thing was going to fall through after all; but to the surprise of everyone the young fellow returned, "I should very much like to see you try it."

The onlookers became breathless and silent from excitement. Dooley then gave a laugh. Ah! this was better than he expected, he would get the "tenner" after all. He came close, quite close to Senior, and shoving his face into the other's, and lifting his right hand up, exclaimed, "'Ere, I am a-going to give yer a punch on the blooming jaw'r."

With open hand Senior gave him a sounding smack on his cheek. "Here," he said, "take your ugly face out of mine!"

Not a sound was uttered, all were flabbergasted at the young man's foolhardiness. Now they expected to see

him smashed, and not a few actually trembled in sympathy for him.

Dooley for a moment or two seemed paralysed, then he sprang at Senior, at whom he aimed a savage blow, which the other ducked. Not being able to get back, owing to the crowd that hemmed them in, Senior closed with the prize-fighter, and both fell to the ground side by side.

Old Stewart, who had been a careful observer of all that had passed, now rushed forward. "Here," he cried, "step back, give them room. Give them fair play! Stand back!"

After both men had regained their feet, and were going to commence hostilities again, the old Scotchman stepped between them and begged of them to "hold on a bit," and he turned round to address the spectators. Every office and bar was now empty. Diamond buyers and brokers, barmen, billiard-markers, and barmaids were all mixed up together, eagerly crowding round to see the struggle between the two men. Mrs. Frilling, who had had the "young 'un" posted to give her timely warning as soon as Senior called at Jaco's office, rushed to the spot with feverish haste, followed by all her boarders. She, with her gross animal nature, loved to see two of her fellow creatures smashing one another. Mrs. Getit drew nigh also, longing to see the chastisement of this young man who had robbed her of the girl, the prettiest and, until spoilt by him, best barmaid on the Fields.

Aaron Jaco came to his office door, innocently inquiring "What is the matter?"

Rothel, the young diamond buyer, replied, "Oh, nothing; there is a young fellow here going to give Dooley a thrashing."

"I'll lay you a level hundred he don't," the other responded.

"It's a bet," and out came pocket-books, and the wager was duly entered.

Mr. Stewart said, speaking in a loud tone, "Gentlemen, we are Englishmen, and as such we want fair play."

"Hear! hear!" said the crowd.

"Now this lad," pointing to Senior, "is only a youngster, do you understand, and only half the size of Dooley there; and I am sure that that gentleman would not like to take any mean advantage."

"Ain't he a kidder!" said a barman who was standing close to the prizefighter.

"Now," went on the Scotchman, "perhaps you are not aware of it, but there is a lot of money on, and although the boy here doesn't stand a ten to one chance, still, gentlemen—although I have been betting heavily on his being knocked out in ten minutes myself—still, I say, gentlemen, let us give him a fair show."

"Hear! hear!" was the response.

"Let us appoint a referee and a timekeeper, and go off to the racecourse and have it out there, where we won't be interrupted."

But there were prolonged cries of "No! no! let them have it out now!"

The spectators, excited to the highest pitch, were in no mood to restrain their impatience, and thirsted for a sight of blood like Spaniards at a bullfight.

"All right, then," said Mr. Stewart. "I propose Captain Wall as referee."

This nomination was received by shouts of approval.

Captain Wall, who was a military-looking man of slender build, and known as an ardent sportsman, after feebly offering objections, accepted the onerous position. Charlie Dales, a sporting digger, was asked by him to keep the time.

Cheeky having heard her lover's name mentioned, and seeing Mrs. Frilling and the boarders hurry off to the Diamond Market, had also followed, and was apparently unmoved by the scene before her. She took her position beside Mr. Stewart and Senior.

Captain Wall then asked the onlookers to be good enough to keep on the sidewalks, so as to give the men lots of room.

"Yes, yes, good idea!" Mr. Stewart exclaimed, energetically pushing the crowd back. Cheeky, however, refused to leave the road; she was going, she said, to see that Jack had fair play. This caused much amusement.

At length everything was ready, a billiard-marker and a barman volunteered their services to attend to the wants of Dooley, and Mr. Stewart placed himself in the same position to Senior.

Time was called, and the fight began.

Both men had stripped to their undervests. Senior,

with his bare arms and knickerbockers, looked like a Herculean school-boy; while Dooley resembled a huge brewer's drayman.

It was not long before the latter made a rush at his smaller opponent, but he was met with a straight left between the eyes; and with both hands true as arrows, Senior drove home his blows with a dull thud-thud, on the other's fleshy, ill-conditioned face. They both stood up to it, but Dooley's blows came much slower, and were slightly round in their delivery, landing for the most part on the sides and back of the other's head.

Mr. Stewart's orders had been to his principal, "Go for him from start to finish. He is not in a condition to fight a couple of rounds. He would lick himself from his own exertions in five minutes. You must be quick, too, before the police come. Keep at him until you finish him. Now *I'm* telling you." The old Scotchman kept laughing heartily, "Keep to him, stick to him! There is your Dooley for you!" he cried.

Dooley lost his head. The young fellow's extraordinary in-fighting abilities had taken him by surprise. Instead of falling to avoid the terrible punishment, and thereby gaining some breathing time, he kept vainly trying to stem the tide of the other's furious onslaught.

Cheeky stood still in the road, holding her lover's coat and hat. Arms akimbo, and her chin tossed up disdainfully, she watched the conflict with assumed indifference, but glancing every now and then at the group of women who stood with their eyes bent on the fray, her looks seemed to say, "Ah, this is *my* Jack, he belongs to me. What do you think of *him*? None of you poor creatures have a man like that!"

At last Dooley closed with Senior, but the latter turned quickly and got his opponent's head under his left arm, "in chancery," as they term it, and with his right he sent in smashing blows on the other's face. At length Senior got the prize-fighter well on his hip and threw him a fair cross-buttock. Dooley lay half-stunned and totally exhausted. For once the greatest bully on the Fields had got his punishment.

In vain his seconds tried to raise him up. "Time" was called, but though conscious, the burly pugilist made no effort to rise.

The excited crowd, women and all, then drew round to gloat on his bruised and battered face.

Mrs. Frilling and Aaron Jaco had stood close together during the progress of the battle; the latter, like the woman, dearly loved a pugilistic encounter. Though passionately fond of money and trying to make it, he would always neglect business at the prospect of seeing a fight. This was looked upon by many as a redeeming feature.

At the conclusion of the conflict Jaco and Mrs. Frilling turned and looked at each other, drawn as it were by a magnetic sympathy. Their faces wore a soft dull look occasioned by a satisfied feeling of gorged animalism, like wild beasts after a feed of flesh.

"Ah," said the man—he had even forgotten about the loss of the £100 he had wagered—"ah," he said, as he smacked his lips, "ain't he a murderer, a regular murderer? Short and sweet, but what a fight!"

The woman replied, as she still experienced a sweet tingling nervous sensation, produced by pleasurable excitement, "He's a perfect devil! Just look at Dooley's face! There's punishment for you! 'Ain't he a lady?" and then, as the thought found its way into her dull brain, she exclaimed, "But better him nor you. What a lucky escape you've 'ad!"

Jaco laughed long and heartily at this.

The crowd had now gathered round Senior, and loud were its congratulations.

Cheeky stood holding him by the hand, looking up at his face. Ah, he was a god, a supernatural being in her eyes!

"A purse! a purse!" someone cried.

"Yes, that is right," old Stewart exclaimed, and taking off his hat he went round for subscriptions for the gallant hero of the hour.

The diamond-dealers of Kimberley were not only rich, but liberal—and who so free with their money to honour deeds of valour as the Jews? The sovereigns were thrown in with great plenitude, making a clinking sound as they fell in a golden heap in the Scotchman's hat.

Senior held up his arms, and said, "Gentlemen, I'm no prize-fighter; I fought this man because he insulted me, and I want no money for what I have done." And with a feeling of pride, that he was able to show them all

that he was a gentleman and no common professional pugilist, he walked away with his head up, Cheeky still holding his hand and carrying his clothes. She looked like some dutiful child of the people, attending a disreputable father who has been embroiled in a row.

CHAPTER XV.

At the end of ten days, the time appointed, Foxnisky came to see May Leslie. She observed that he wore a grave, displeased look. After seating himself and leisurely crossing his legs, he said, in an ironical tone: "Thank you very much, Miss Leslie, thank you awfully. I am sure I'm much obliged to you!"

May Leslie assumed an air of bewilderment.

"Oh, no," the other went on, "I won't forget your kindness, either."

"I'm sure," said the girl, "I have not the faintest idea why you are so sarcastic and mysterious. You surely don't connect me in any way with Ikey Mosetinstine's leaving the country, do you?" She thought it wise not to affect too much innocence. "Now, I'll just tell you all I did, and you can see for yourself. The very day you were here I sent for him."

"I know you did," interrupted the detective.

"Yes, well? and I made it up with him; I pretended that I was awfully sorry for having left him, and was dying to go back. He was simply charmed at my penitence; but he showed me a letter he had received by the last mail from his brother's wife in London—his brother is a big diamond-buyer in London, you know."

Foxnisky nodded his head as if he knew the fact perfectly well. Though the I.D.B. had no brother at all, still, a clever detective was supposed to know a great deal.

"Well," May Leslie continued, "he begged and prayed of me to go to England with him, actually went down on his knees and shed tears. 'May,' he said, 'vill you come mit me and ve have some good times. Vill you come? Oh, do come!'" May Leslie imitated Mosetinstine's whining accent to the letter, and Foxnisky laughed.

"Oh, well, I forgot to tell you," she went on, "this letter from his brother's wife was asking him to come home at once as his brother was not expected to live, he was suffering from typhus fever, and his affairs were in a terrible mess. I believe if I had tried very hard I could have got him to stay, but I could not under the circumstances be so heartless. And, another thing, Mr. Foxnisky; 'pon my word! I thought I hated him, detested him, you know, but when I saw with what open arms he received me——! He sent his boy Charley round here; you know him, I suppose?"

"Rather!" answered the detective in a significant tone. "I should think so! the smartest black scoundrel on the Fields."

"Well, he sent him round and asked me to keep him until he came back, and he also gave me a power of attorney to do anything I liked with his house and furniture. Well, I was going to say, after his so readily trusting me in the way he did, I made up my mind to tell you plump and plain that I could not get myself to act the double under the circumstances. I thought I could, you know, for he struck me, and that blow rankled in my bosom until I started to play the part of Judas towards him. He seemed so pleased to think I had any regard for him, and offered me money and what not, that, to tell you the truth, I felt quite ashamed of myself. Yes, really. And, Mr. Foxnisky, I believe if a man behaved ever so badly to me I should forgive him, if he only gave me a few words of kindness afterwards."

Foxnisky fixed his keen black eyes upon her to try and discern by any little thing in her manner or expression whether or not she was speaking the truth. She met his glance fearlessly at first, and, looking down at her feet, she softly said, "Don't look at me like that, Mr. Foxnisky." Then, like a simple child, she added, "Please, I am telling you the truth; I am telling you the truth."

Foxnisky experienced, he did not know why, a pleasurable feeling. Those piercing black eyes of his were very effective, he knew, in more ways than one, especially with women.

After a pause, May went on, "But, Mr. Foxnisky, I did not betray your confidence. No, I could not do that, especially"—here she stopped suddenly.

She had beautiful eyes, and she knew well how to use them. Keen, searching, and practised as the detective's were, they were no match for those of the girl, though she allowed hers coquettishly to quail before him.

Good-looking men are nearly always vain, and the detective was no exception. In spite of his experience of arts and artifices, May Leslie was already succeeding in humbugging him, and in making him believe that he was creating an impression upon her. Even the plainest and most prosaic man, as a rule, has a lurking idea that there is something about him that has an attractive influence on the opposite sex, indescribable though it may be even to himself. Anyhow, Foxnisky thought she was straightforward enough in the matter; she evidently had no desire to mislead him, and the reasons she gave for refusing to become his accomplice discovered to him, detective as he was, a new but attractive trait in her character. Notwithstanding the many heartrending scenes he was continually called upon to witness—husbands and wives, mothers and their children, lovers and their mistresses separated by long terms of penal servitude through the allurements of the great Diamond Fields evil—he was still sufficiently human to be attracted by the motives of this exceedingly comely woman.

Although he was satisfied with her explanation, and the thing was now at an end, he still remained. True, he twice rose, and muttered, as he looked at his watch, something about "time really to go," but May Leslie put so much expression into her request, "Oh, please do not go yet; just stay a little longer," that he sat down again.

She asked him if he was fond of music, and he replying in the affirmative, she sang several pleasing catchy songs from various comic operas, accompanying herself on the piano. She made him a nice cup of tea; told him, apparently in confidence, much of her past history; asked him several questions as to his likes and dislikes, appearing to take a great interest in his answers, even to the most trivial questions. And all this flattered his vanity. But he was not surprised. Why, how many conquests had he not made before? and even when he had not the slightest idea of trying, either. Foxnisky, a taciturn individual, became quite conversational, and even confidential.

At length, May Leslie, who happened to be standing by

the window, exclaimed, "Oh! here is Searight coming up the street."

Foxnisky at once rose, but she whispered in a tone full of meaning, "No, don't go; stay. Let me introduce you; don't you think it will be best?"

Foxnisky, looking at her, wondered if she meant to prevent any inquiry as to the reason of his suddenly going on the other's appearance, since it might suggest a suspicious intimacy. He could not determine, but even the doubt was some small gratification.

Searight was introduced to the detective, whom he knew well by sight, and was surprised to meet here. May Leslie, with a knowing look at her lover, said, "A very old friend, Charlie. I have known Mr. Foxnisky ever since I was a little girl." She placed her hand about three and a half feet from the floor to intimate that that was her height when she first knew the gentleman.

Foxnisky was conscious of a slightly embarrassed feeling, similar to that experienced by a man when the husband of the woman he loves enters unexpectedly.

After some conversation, during which both the men felt a little awkward, the detective took his leave. May came out on the stoep, and, as she gave him her hand, momentarily pressed his, but so slightly that he was not quite sure afterwards whether she had or not.

"Good-bye," she said, and opening her soft eyes to their widest she looked earnestly at him. "You will come again, won't you? Oh, do come! I have enjoyed your visit so much to-day. We are going to shift to-morrow into Ikey Mosetenstine's house," and then, lowering her voice ever so little, she added, "Come soon," to which he, in rather a low tone, replied, "All right."

As Foxnisky walked down the street he unconsciously held his head up slightly and strutted a little in his walk. No doubt about it, he thought, there was something "fetching" either in his looks or manner, perhaps both; and he said to himself with pretended modesty, "I wonder what the devil it is?"

If he had only seen and heard all that went on in the cottage after he had left, how different would he have felt!

"Now, Charlie," May Leslie said when they were alone, "I think I have done a good afternoon's work."

"How's that?"

"Well, you see, I have been doing my utmost to make that conceited ass believe I was struck with him, and so in consequence to get him struck with me, and I think I can say, without any flattery, that I have made him recognize that I am not only a pretty woman, but a devilish nice one, too. Charlie, I'll bet you a new hat that in a week or two I shall have that man passionately in love with me."

"Well, what good will that do?" asked the other, a little jealous.

"I have a scheme, another scheme! Oh! I am fond of scheming and plotting. Charlie, I believe I was intended for better things; some great diplomatist's wife. Now listen to me; this must be the programme: First of all you and I go down to Natal for a couple of weeks, presumably with the intention of getting married and spending our honeymoon. When we come back, you must, on every occasion, tell everyone it was so, and introduce me to all your friends as your wife. Foxnisky falls in love with me; I shall show by my manner that I am not indifferent to him, but at the same time I do not forget that I am your lawful wife, and that I am determined to be faithful to you. Now, Foxnisky is one of the chief detectives, and knows everything that goes on—knows always when a man is going to be trapped. We, as diamond-buyers, would also like to have an ear as to what goes on behind the scenes. Foxnisky will be that ear, and a good long donkey's one, too."

"By Jove! you are a clever girl," exclaimed Searight.

"Now," went on May Leslie, "you, as husbands invariably do, turn out to be an outsider. You have married me under false pretences, and your great expectations come to nothing. You force me to buy diamonds against my will; in my fear of you I do so."

"But the brute might trap me, especially if he is in love with you," said Searight, who did not by any means like the idea of playing the rôle of the brutal husband.

"Oh! you thick-headed darling. Who is going to do the buying?"

"Why, you."

"Well, how can you be trapped? You see, you are afraid, so you force me against my will to buy."

"But, by Jove! everyone will cut me. I will be thought, in fact, a perfect blackguard. Could it not be managed some other way?"

"No, Charlie, it is all right. You see, I tell Foxnisky in the greatest confidence. He at my expressed desire swears not to reveal this secret I have entrusted him with. Well, in a year's time or so we will have made enough money to leave the country; then, to clear your name, dearest, even in the opinion of this one man, I shall write and let him know what a fool I have made of him."

Searight laughed. "Yes," he said, "that will do all right. But do you think you will be able to keep him in the toils long enough? Don't you think he'll get rather tired of it if——"

"Oh! trust me," broke in the girl. "You know I really believe I should have made a great name for myself on the stage. Yes, I ought to have been a great actress—I feel it. Now, look here; just let us rehearse the play, so I shall be able to go through my part without a mistake. You'll be Foxnisky. My husband is out. I am in tears at some fresh outrage, some late exhibition of his brutality. First of all I sob in a heartbroken way, as soon as I see you enter; the sight of you rouses me strangely. Of course, a mental comparison takes place." (May Leslie sobs.) "You say, 'Dear Mrs. Searight, why those tears?' No, that would not do; we must make it more realistic. Mr. Foxnisky as a detective in love would not be quite so sentimental—in his speech, any way. He would be matter-of-fact. He would say, 'Well, what is the matter now? Has that brute of a husband of yours been going for you again?' Then I would come a little closer" (she came closer to Searight, who was standing in the centre of the room); "you see I cherish his kind sympathy. 'Oh, please,' I say, 'don't ask me. Remember he is my husband!'" (More sobs, and the handkerchief was placed to her eyes.) "Now, you, as Foxnisky, will have to say, 'Yes! h'm! and a damned fine husband, too. If I were you I'm hanged if I would stand it any longer.' Then I say, putting my hand on his shoulder like this" (she put her hand on Searight's shoulder), "and looking up in his face" (assuming a most pathetic expression as she raised her face towards the other), "'Ah! you are indeed my friend, kind Mr. Foxnisky—William. May I call you by

that name?" (That's his christian name, I think, is it not?) "Now you say, 'Yes, call me anything you like.' 'Well, dear Willie,' I go on—now I hold out my hand like that, and you take it, and I press yours. Now I bring my face closer; my warm breath is on your cheek; you cannot stand it any longer. You clasp me in your arms. Come now." (Searight took her in his arms.) "I feel faint and yielding. I tremble." (She shuddered.) "Now press me to you and just bend your head as if you were going to imprint a kiss on my lips." (Searight obeyed.) "When I start and exclaim, 'Hark! What's that?'" (She held up her hand warningly as if to enjoin silence.) "'Tis my husband's footstep. Oh! leave me at once. Go out through the front door; he is coming through the back way. Oh, quick! for mercy's sake!'" (She hastily pushed Searight towards the door, and they both burst out laughing boisterously.) "How is that? Not bad, is it? But now let us go through it properly again. Now, you try and speak your own—at least Foxnisky's—part."

She insisted upon going through it again and again, until she thought they knew their parts perfectly, as if rehearsing for a performance at a theatre.

"Would not that make a splendid third act in a domestic drama?" she asked. "Let us see, now; what might we call it? 'The Brutal Husband,' 'The Injured Wife,' or 'The Detective Lover'?"

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN some daring spirit dons the gloves in a boxing booth at some fair or race meeting with one of the itinerant bruisers belonging to the show, the spectators, who have paid their couple of coppers each to see the contest, look upon the dauntless amateur as one of themselves, hence their entire sympathy is always with him, and greatly do they rejoice and applaud if he be successful in tapping the pugilist's "claret," or in scoring a fair "knock-down blow." Senior became quite a hero in the

eyes of the sport-loving community of the Diamond Fields, through his short, sharp and decisive victory over the quarrelsome Dooley. His modest bearing, which would otherwise have been the means of his remaining almost entirely unnoticed, helped to increase his fame and popularity. To be such a remarkably good hand with the fists, and still to be so unassuming, was indeed a virtue.

Several of the younger diamond dealers, when it was now known that Senior had been trying to get a situation, guaranteed at once to get him into something, but Mr. Stewart had already bespoken his services.

The day after his fight with Dooley, the old Scotchman had called upon him. Senior appeared, the other thought, just a trifle cool. Mr. Stewart wondered if Senior supposed that he had arranged the whole thing as a "plant" to get him to fight the pugilist, so he hastened to explain and give his version of the affair. Aaron Jaco had hired Dooley, he said, to thrash Senior. The former, everyone knew, had conceived a fancy for Cheeky, and had got Mrs. Frilling, the landlady of the "Albion," to try to get the girl to leave Senior. It had come to Aaron Jaco's ears that Cheeky had told her lover all about it, and that Senior was coming round to the millionaire's office to chastise him. Dooley was to receive a large sum if he thrashed Senior at any time or place within a week. Mr. Stewart was afraid that the prize-fighter might take the other unawares, so he concocted the little ruse of pretending that Aaron Jaco wanted to see Senior to apologise about something, as he, Mr. Stewart wished, if the thing were to come off, that it should happen in a place like the Diamond Market, where fair play might be ensured, and when he should be there to look after his young friend.

"Man," he went on, "it is the best possible thing that could have happened to you, do you see? You made more friends yesterday in five minutes than you could have done if you lived here a lifetime. And it's me you ought to thank, too, do you understand, for looking out for you. A nice thing if you had got kicked to death some dark night. Now they are all afraid of you. Man, it was the best possible place, too, for you, before all the leading men in Kimberley!

"But that, too, was clever of you, refusing that purse. I was so pleased to see you smother the big brute

There would only have been about fifty pounds at the outside. But you let them see at once you were a gentleman, and as good as any one of them; and for the few pounds and the good it would have done you, you were wise, I'm telling you, to refuse it; because, don't you see, if you work your cards well that refusal ought to be worth hundreds to you. Man, I think I can see you with your hands up, like this [Mr. Stewart held up his arms in imitation of Senior], and the way you said, 'Gentlemen, I am no prizefighter. I have fought this man because he insulted me. I want none of your money.' And then your walking away quietly, as if nothing had happened, with the lassie holding your hands. Man, I tell ye! it had a fine effect. Oh, yes! a very fine effect. Now, I told you the other day, do you remember, that I thought I could put you on to something: well, it has come off. I am going to manage at Swabs Gulley in De Beers, you know, and I have a nice little billet for you—machine manager, £8 a week; much better in every way than your last position as overseer. Of course the commission on the finds won't come to a great deal, as there is not much chance of picking up many stones at the job. Sometimes, when they are putting the blue into the machine, you come across one, but seldom."

A load was at once lifted off Senior's mind. Forty pounds was all he had left; the billet had come just in time. The thought that now there would be no necessity for parting with Cheeky, for some time at least, was the sweetest of all. He said to himself, "I am really glad for the girl's sake, as now I shall be, in a manner of speaking, independent, and shall have time to carefully consider what is best to be done, before taking any hasty steps in the matter. Of course, some day, she will have to leave me; but, with such a responsibility thrust upon me, I must do justice to it."

Thus he deceived himself.

He now looked out for a small furnished house. One was advertised to let in Lennox Street—that occupied by May Leslie and Searight. He called and found the former in. He knew the girl by sight, and admired her good looks. He introduced himself, informing her that he had come in answer to the advertisement. May Leslie replied, "Oh, so you are Mr. Senior, the wonderful boxer?"

Senior laughed and looked shy.

"And you are quite an old, old friend of Mr. Searight's. I have often heard him speak of you."

Senior replied that he had known Searight for some time. They were at the front together.

"Oh! I should so like to be a good boxer if I were a man. So nice to feel you could punch anybody's head, if you wanted to. Mr. Searight is also a good boxer, is he not?"

"I never saw him box, so I can't tell, but he is a big, strong fellow, and ought to be able to," added he, wishing to please the girl.

"But he has often boxed with you, has he not?"

"No, never."

May Leslie thought to herself, "Charlie can tell them when he likes!" She then showed Senior over the house, which evidently satisfied him. Although he spoke very politely, and he could not have shown more respect to any lady, May Leslie was not quite sure whether or not she thought well of him. There was an air of honesty and sincerity about him that somehow piqued her. Searight had told her much about this young fellow, whose success over Dooley was now in the mouths of everyone. Her lover had spoken somewhat eulogistically and yet disparagingly of Senior. He was honest and courageous, but a prig—one of those fellows who never drank: there was precious little go or fun in him. Searight could not understand how Senior came to get hold of Cheeky, as he was so terribly afraid of women. "I bet you," he had said, "that the girl forced herself upon him; though what she could see in him puzzles me."

May Leslie had the weakness—if it can be so called—of high-spirited women: she admired physical prowess. She looked upon Senior with feelings of a mixed nature. His fistic renown drew from her a certain kind of respect, but the priggishness Searight spoke of made her not a little contemptuous; having a confused idea that honesty was always associated with softness of character. It gave her a pleasure to contrast the vivacity and good looks of her lover with the quiet, subdued manner and plainness of this young man.

Senior agreed to take the cottage furnished at a rental

of £9 per month. May Leslie, who did not know at what moment Ikey might turn up and oust her from his house, would only agree to let it by the month. She told him he could take possession in a couple of days, as on the morrow Searight and she would be starting for Natal.

In the evening, when Searight came home, May Leslie told him she had let the house to an old friend of his.

"To whom?" he asked.

"To Senior, the boxer."

"What!" exclaimed the other. "Well, you have put your foot into it this time with all your cleverness!"

"Why?"

"Why! because I owe him close on £70, and now he might deduct it off the rent, don't you see?"

"But he never mentioned a word about it. He even promised to come round to-morrow and pay the first month's rent in advance."

"Well, neither would he say a word about it to you! Senior, though he is a bit of an ass in many ways, is a gentleman."

"What do you owe him the money for, Charlie?"

Searight then told her how he had gambled away Dr. Crowlet's money, and that, being anxious to have a chance of winning it back, he had persuaded Senior to lend him £50. The other money, he explained, was for small loans of five shillings, and board paid for him at that beastly hole the "Albion."

"But has he such lots of money, then?"

"Senior? No; only a few pounds he saved when he was an overseer. He is one of those fellows, don't you know, who are frightened to spend a cent."

May Leslie's heart softened at once, because she thought Senior had probably stinted himself to lend her lover money. It was quite natural, Charlie was so dashing and handsome and winning.

"Then why don't you pay him back?" she asked. "I expect, now that he has the young girl on his hands, he'll require every halfpenny he can get."

"Oh! there is no cast-iron hurry about it, is there? He always manages somehow to make ends meet. He is one of that sort, you know. You had better wait till we are well set on our legs before you talk about paying creditors."

But the woman's mind was made up; she would pay the money herself, and say nothing to her lover about it. She had quite a friendly feeling towards Senior now.

The next day, according to promise, he called.

May Leslie said, "Oh, Mr. Senior, by the bye, Mr. Searight gave me some money to pay you. I think he said it was £70 he owed you." She pulled a bundle of notes from her pocket. "He told me to tell you that he was very sorry that he had been unable to repay you this before. He got a remittance from his father last mail, and when I told him that you had taken the house, it at once put him in remembrance that he owed you some money."

Senior was surprised. "What on earth had come over Searight?" he wondered. And then, looking quickly up at the girl's face, he there saw something expressed that told him it was her doing.

He replied, "It is only £65. Are you quite sure you—he can afford it?"

May Leslie actually blushed—those piercing eyes of this man could evidently see right through her. Apparently he did not think Searight even capable of that small amount of honesty, of paying back that which he had borrowed. It was somewhat humiliating, but poor Charlie was such a thoughtless fellow. She insisted, and with some degree of haughtiness, too, that he must take the money at once.

Senior then took it and said, "Thank you very much, Miss Leslie," with a slight emphasis on the "you."

"No, don't thank me; what have I to do with it? I am only doing what Searight asked me to do."

She did not like the idea of this young fellow thinking so little of her lover.

"Besides," she went on, "all the thanks are due to you; it was so kind of you to lend the money when you had—when you were not very rich yourself. Mr. Searight told me that you actually stinted yourself to oblige him. He says he can never forget it." She was determined to exalt Searight in this man's eyes.

"There are very few who think like you, Miss Leslie," he said.

"In which way?"

"Well, you know, if you lend a fellow money—at least, I have found it nearly always so—if he does pay you back, he puts on no end of airs, as much as to say, 'Is it not

good of me to pay you that sum you lent me? Ah! you see, I am an honest man, I think you ought to be very much obliged to me.' Yes; instead of realising that you have done him a kindness, as a rule, it is the other way about."

"You are quite right, that is just the way; I have frequently noticed it myself," observed May Leslie.

With a sudden impulse, prompted probably by the feeling that she was getting on fairly well with this peculiar young man, she asked him if he would not come and dine with them some night, and bring Mrs. Senior with him. Senior looked confused; calling Cheeky by that name sounded strange. Another thing, he would not for the world that his little girl, as he called her, should become intimate with this kind of woman. He hesitated too long before replying, and the other guessed what was passing through his mind.

At length he said, "Well, you know, it is very kind of you, Miss Leslie;" then he faltered again, wondering what excuse to make. "You see," he went on, "I am expecting to go to work every day, and I don't really know what time I shall be having to myself. I expect my duties will keep me rather late at night."

May Leslie felt irritated to think that probably he thought her company was not good enough for his vulgar little barmaid; so she, not a little spitefully, to make him feel still more awkward, suggested that Mrs. Senior should come alone. "The poor little girl would be feeling lonely all day long by herself."

"Ah!" said Senior confusedly, "I don't think—well, in fact, I am sure—at least, she told me herself, you know, that she would not care to go out;" and then, looking at his watch, and feeling very ill at ease, he exclaimed, "But, oh, I must be going," as if he had some important engagement to keep. He lifted his hat, and wished May Leslie good-day.

The girl slammed the door abruptly, plainly showing she was displeased.

In due time Cheeky and Senior took up their abode in the cottage.

The girl was delighted with their new quarters, and was in a great state of excitement at the thought of house-keeping—her first attempt. She made an excellent little

manager, having had to put her hands to all kinds of housework ever since she could toddle.

Her mother, Mrs. Smirker, who had recently gone to Durban, had caused Senior no little annoyance by sending him a letter, exceedingly ill-written and badly-spelt, demanding of him what right he had to take her daughter out of the "New Dug Out," from the service of a respectable lady like Mrs. Getit, who paid her good wages, out of which she, Mrs. Smirker, had been allowed £6 per month. She threatened to have him arrested for abduction, and all kinds of criminal offences, if her daughter did not go back to the bar again, and if she, Mrs. Smirker, were not paid for the time already lost. Senior sent the woman £10, and in a very short communication informed her that he would send her £7 a month until her daughter got a situation suited to her. This was evidently satisfactory to the old lady, as he heard nothing further.

Although Senior had become very much attached to Cheeky, still she was no companion to him. She was undoubtedly pretty, very affectionate, and naturally of a truthful disposition. She had quaint, loving, childish ways that drew everyone to her. Through her early intimacy with the cares and troubles of the world, she had developed a discernment of character unusual for one of her years, and had gained a certain kind of street-Arab acuteness; but beyond this her mind was almost a blank. Education she had practically received none. Her ideas of geography and history were indeed limited. She knew there was a place called England; she had left there with her mother when she was nine years of age; but where that country was she had not the remotest idea. With a great deal of spelling and guessing at some of the words she could manage to read a little, but writing was altogether beyond her.

Senior's fondness for her at this time partook of the paternal as much as the lover's; and in the girl's love for him there was much of that reverence which a child feels for a father.

Leonard visited them often now. Senior and he used to air their young ideas and discuss the social problems of the day like two old philosophers, whilst Cheeky would sit in silent admiration, listening to what she considered 'great wisdom, although hardly understanding a word.

Leonard could play the piano well, and Senior got him to teach Cheeky some songs. The girl had a good ear, and a charmingly pretty mezzo-soprano voice, and it was wonderful the amount of feeling she put into her singing.

When Senior and Leonard were alone, the latter invariably reverted to the advisability of his friend's severing the connection. "I'll just tell you what it is," he said on one occasion: "you'll be marrying that girl before you are done with her, and you would never forgive yourself if you did. It is all very well now the child is young and pretty, and amuses you with her funny ways, but when these youthful charms are gone, what will there be to fall back upon? She is totally uneducated, and she does not possess a couple of ideas. Certainly, she is rather exceptional for one of her class, but just fancy your taking her home and introducing her to your people as your wife! She is all well enough here on the Fields, but what a figure she would cut in England amongst cultured people!"

"Oh," replied Senior, "don't you be afraid of my marrying her or anybody else. I don't believe in it. But, to tell you the honest truth, do you know what I think? Well, that she is just the sort of girl I should like to marry if I went in for that sort of thing. And I'll tell you why. The ordinary English girl is—well, how uninteresting she is! She moves about in the narrowest of grooves; her education has been a sort of superficial polish—a sham; her knowledge of the world is *nil*. By Jove! English girls know positively nothing about the way men live. All they know is what takes place in their own narrow circle. They do a little Sunday School teaching, or a little district-visiting during the week, and a few carpet-dances; but what do they know about life in general? Now this girl, Cheeky, knows all that goes on behind the scenes. She knows what brutes the majority of men really are. Her mind is still young and impressionable. One could mould that girl's character and make a splendid woman of her. Her knowledge of the seamy side of life would stand her in good stead. You could talk to her about things that would be Greek to the English girl with her confounded innocence—or rather ignorance, as it should be called. Knowledge is power, no doubt about it, and especially knowledge of our fellow-

creatures, their motives and actions. If you happen to say anything to an English girl which is not considered quite orthodox, she will look upon you as a heathen; she uses no independent judgment in the matter, but condemns you according to her narrow prejudices. What she has been taught to believe is right, is right, and there is an end of it. Her vision, all her life, has been very circumscribed indeed."

Leonard said that there was no use in arguing with him, he took such peculiar views of things. He knew very well what sort of a wife he would prefer. It would be one with the strongest of prejudices. "Why, do you mean to tell me," he went on, "that a girl who has been brought up to look upon certain sins with the greatest of awe is not more to be depended on than one who has seen so much wickedness that familiarity dulls her horror of it, and, in consequence, she thinks but little of the committal of the wrong? But we are going away from the subject:—When are you going to get rid of this girl?" Leonard was truly alarmed that his friend should marry her, well knowing his affectionate nature.

Senior, who hated to realise that the evil day must arrive when he and Cheeky would have to separate, replied rather crossly, "Oh, let us change the subject; you are always on the same old thing. To tell you the truth, old man, I am getting a bit sick of it."

To amuse himself, and also, as he said, preparatory to laying the foundation of the girl's character, Senior commenced to instruct her in reading and writing. He bought a beginner's reading book and an exercise book. In the latter he got her to make what is known amongst children, when they first try to wield the pen, as "strokes" and "pot-hooks"; then she advanced to large "m's." It was uphill work at first, teaching her, as her mind was totally undisciplined, and unaccustomed to the application now required, but being anxious to learn, it was not long before she showed improvement.

He picked out novels which he thought would, besides amusing her, tend to have a healthy influence on her growing mind, and read to her in the evenings. But the meanings of so many words and phrases had to be explained that the interest flagged, and she seemed to get wearied. Senior was a little disappointed; he believed so

much could be done by reading good books. Her mind was an inquiring one. She was continually asking questions, and, like those of a child, often puzzling ones, the nature of which reminded Senior of the same sort of things which perplexed his brain when he was about eight years old. At that period of his life, he remembered, began the development of his fondness for books. "Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales" was the work that first absorbed his interest. He wondered if these tales would be a good starting-point for Cheeky. He purchased the volume, and was much pleased to find that, so far as interesting her, the experiment was entirely successful. She was simply enchanted, and now listened to his reading with rapt attention. Sometimes the tales made her laugh, sometimes moved her to tears. There were stores of true sentiment within this uncultured little girl's heart. "The Little Mermaid" was her favourite. "Oh, it was so sad, and yet so sweet," she said. But she was disappointed when Senior told her that there were no fairies in the world.

Cheeky was very fond of anything in the way of athletic exercises. Senior taught her all the mysteries and graces of Indian-club swinging. He even gave her lessons in boxing, and in a short time she could "lead off" with the left, "counter" with both hands, and "break ground" as lightly and gracefully as a past-master in the art of ballet-dancing.

In prospect of a good salary, and through the unexpected payment of Searight's debt to him, Senior frequently indulged in the luxury of hiring a couple of horses, and took the girl for long rides. Cheeky looked her best on horseback. Her figure was lithe and supple. She was naturally graceful, and her hands were light and sensitive. She soon learned to ride remarkably well.

Her stock of dresses was not well chosen, so Senior, a good deal from selfish motives, replenished it. He liked to see her look her best, and anything gaudy or out of place sadly marred the girl's soft beauty. Her appearance improved wonderfully.

Senior was not religious himself, but whether from force of early associations and kindly memories of his loving and pious mother, or because he thought a woman was the better for having religion—perhaps it was both these

influences—he used among other tales to tell this little girl, unconsciously adopting the simple language employed by his mother in his childhood's days, of man's first sin in the Garden of Eden; the story of Abraham and his son Isaac; of Joseph being sold by his brethren into Egypt. The stories that pleased her most, however, were those of Jesus of Nazareth. The ideal life of the Son of Man appealed strongly to this girl's sensitive nature, so rich in the purest and highest sentiment. When he first told her the harrowing tale of the "Crucifixion," Cheeky's eyes were wet with tears. She was silent for a few moments, and then she suddenly threw her arms around her lover's neck. "Oh," she exclaimed, "isn't He just lovely? I wish you had been there; you would have wired into those wicked people like you did to Dooley. You know, is it not funny? I used to think that Jesus Christ was some awful person, for when any of the customers, for instance, at the 'New Dug Out' said 'Oh, Christ!' Mrs. Getit used to hold up her hands and say, 'Gentlemen! gentlemen! better language, please, better language!' But now tell me, is He like the fairies? You know what I mean. Is it all just nice stories, and that's all? He did live, didn't he?"

"Yes," Senior replied, feeling glad that he could honestly answer this question in the affirmative. Cheeky exclaimed, "Oh! I am so glad, I feel I could love Him—yes, dear Jack, almost as well as I do you."

Mr. Stewart addressed her as Mrs. Senior one day. She very quietly told him, and without the least feeling of shame, that she was not Mrs. Senior, that her right name was Eliza Smirker.

The amount of exercise and fresh air she was now enjoying gave to her face the bright glow of full youthful health, but the most marked change was the almost daily increasing look of intelligence and refinement, no doubt produced by her surroundings, and the new channels her mind had entered upon. From morning, when she awoke, until night, when she closed her eyes in slumber, she enjoyed an unbroken and almost childlike happiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was now the month of May. In three days' time Senior would begin work in Swab's Gulley. This morning he had gone to the post-office for letters. Cheeky expected him back very shortly to take her for a long walk. She was seated at a table, doing her writing lesson, her regular work after breakfast. She had now got so far as text, and was writing the word "Command" and a capital "C" at the end of it. Slowly from side to side she moved her head, critically examining each letter as she made it. Presently she heard a step, then the front door opened, and Senior walked in, throwing his hat carelessly on the table and himself on the sofa, shaking the whole room as he did so.

"Oh, Jack, please don't shake, look what you have done!" exclaimed the girl. To her surprise he took no notice, so she continued her writing in silence. After having done her task, she looked towards him and said, "There now, it is finished at last." Still he took no notice. Somewhat piqued she rose and went over to him, and said, "Hi! do you hear? I have finished my writing lesson."

"Yes," he replied absentmindedly.

"Don't you want to look at it?" she asked, hurt at his indifference, which was quite unusual.

"Oh! all right," he replied, but still remained pre-occupied.

"Jack, what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, what! with me?" He started up into a sitting posture, and rubbed his eyes as if only awakened from sleep. She seated herself beside him, then he went on, "Oh! nothing. I have got a letter from home you know. It has been lying there at the post-office some time."

"Well, what about that?"

"Oh, yes, I was going to tell you. It is from Stonegrat, the fellow whom my father appointed as trustee until we came of age; he informs me my grand-uncle, Mr. Cumming, is dead."

Cheeky felt sympathetic at once. "And are you very sorry? Was he a nice gentleman?"

"Oh! to tell you the truth, I don't remember much about him. I don't think I am exactly very sorry. He has left me something rather good in his will."

"Oh! that is grand. I don't mean his dying, you know, but his leaving you something."

"Here is the letter, I'll read it to you."

"DEAR SIR,—It is with sincere regret that I find it my duty to inform you of the death of your much respected grand-uncle, Mr. John Cumming, who passed away at his London residence on the 2nd day of April, after a fit of apoplexy.

"Under the deceased gentleman's will, I have been appointed executor and the administrator of his estate, and have to advise you that your brother and sister have been provided for to the extent of a sum of £250 per annum, and a legacy of £650 in cash each.

"It will be advisable for you to come home as soon as possible, if convenient to do so, and I therefore enclose a draft of £100 for your expenses.

"Regretting this letter is the message of bad news, I am, sir,

"Yours, etc.,

"WM. STONEGRAT."

He put the letter in his pocket, and looked curiously at Cheeky. A sudden change, he noticed, had come over her face; it was now pale, and her lips trembled. He averted his gaze. They both remained in silence for some little time, she hungrily waiting for a word from him to relieve her of the awful feeling of suspense that now weighed upon her. At length he remarked, "Beastly nuisance, isn't it?"

"What?" the girl asked, in a strange voice.

"I don't mean the money, you know, but having to go home about it."

"You are going, then?" she asked, in a half whisper.

"I suppose I must."

"And?" she said simply, looking at him anxiously.

"I suppose I shall have to make a start at once," he replied, still gazing away from her. "I shall have to let old Stewart know, too, immediately, so that he can get someone in my place by Monday. This house, also, I

shall have to arrange about, and get some agent to take care of it until—what's the person's name?—Miss Leslie comes back from Natal. Let us see, now—this is Friday—the mail coach left to-day. I can start next Friday. Thank God the railway is up to Hope-town now; I shall only have one day and night in the coach."

The singular pronoun "I" fell upon her like a death-knell; he did not intend taking her with him then.

After some hesitation he continued: "Of course I shall have to fix you up. I have not quite decided the best plan for you; but, anyhow, we have a week to think over it."

In the child-like content enjoyed by Cheeky in that short period since she had left the "New Dug Out," the thought of even possible separation had never suggested itself to her. Whenever she dreamily looked into the future she and her lover were always together enjoying that undisturbed happiness that the princes and princesses in "Andersen's Fairy Tales" were always blest with to the end of their days. For the first time she thought of, and tried to realise, what losing her lover meant. Ah! what could she do without him? A new ambition had of late been stirred within her. Senior often tried to influence her by speaking of his sister, who was so noble, so unselfish, so refined, and also so learned. Cheeky had made a fixed resolution that she would strive to make herself like this woman. She longed to be so praised and so well thought of by her lover. She was continually asking questions, trying to obtain from him information as to his sister's likes and dislikes, what she thought about this and about that. Now, was this great aim to be dashed to the ground? Was she to lose the man to whom the pent-up affections of her nature had rushed out? What could she do without him? She shuddered at the bare idea of going back to a bar. She had sworn an oath she would not do that, and, come what may, she would keep her resolve.

The thought of returning to her mother, poor child, filled her with a sickening repulsion. Suddenly, there came to her mind the remembrance of a young barmaid at the Theatre Royal bar, Cape Town, who had poisoned herself a couple of years before. It was through love, too,

she had done this. The thought of self-destruction now entered Cheeky's soul, and at once seemed to lift off some of that terrible oppression that had forced itself upon her. If Senior abandoned her, she, too, would poison herself. How she would obtain the poison even troubled and perplexed her not a little: but she would find a way. It was lucky she had learned to write, she reflected. Before committing the deed she would write in her best hand something like this:—"Dear Jack, I could not live without you, so I died by poison. Good-bye, dearest." Curious vain thoughts passed through her brain about how surprised the people would be to see her writing, who had known she could not write before. Then her mind travelled on to the effect the sad news and note of farewell would have upon Jack himself. How bitterly he would regret that he had not taken her with him. This train of thought seemed to soothe her greatly, causing the tears to flow in a relieving shower. The little girl's sorrow moved Senior strangely, and filled him full of a soft melancholy, produced by this visible proof of her affection.

When he had first read the news of his grand-uncle's death he had experienced a feeling of pleasure at the unexpected legacy, touched with a vain regret that one who had been so thoughtful as to remember him in his will was now gone for ever. Then suddenly came thoughts of Cheeky, and he asked himself, "What about the little girl, though?" His mind became confused as he thought of his deceased relative, the happy independent position he was now left in, and what was to be done as regarded Cheeky. He arrived at Lennox Street in the same puzzled state. He dreaded telling the girl that he would have to go home. It never entered his head that he might take her to England with him. He was not even sure that he would ever return.

He drew her to him, and kissed her. Her tears induced all his loving sympathy, and made the thought of losing her terrible. "No," he said to himself, "I realise how much she is to me." He could not do without her. Had he not, he thought, with no small degree of satisfaction, been the means of unfitting her for all kinds of employment within her reach? Then thoughts of Aaron Jaco disturbed his mind, and finally decided him that they should not separate. It was his duty to carry on the good work

he had begun. He dreamily saw himself forming the girl's character, and developing her into a splendid woman, who should always love him devotedly. He whispered softly, as she still sobbed, though less violently, being soothed by his caresses, and thoughts of overwhelming sorrow at her death, "Cheeky, my little darling, don't cry. I don't mean to leave you long. Oh, no, I love you too well for that. You'll come to Cape Town with me, and I'll leave you with some nice respectable people there until I come back. I shall not stay very long at home, I'll be too anxious to see my dear little Cheeky again. When I return we will come up here to Kimberley, and I'll take a billet, and we'll live together then for ever, and be happy all our lives. I shall bring out a lot of nice dresses, books, and all kinds of things for you. Now don't cry any more, sweetest."

Every word uttered by Senior, Cheeky accepted with unquestioning faith. She brightened up. After all, he would only be away a few weeks, very likely. His loving words, so softly spoken, had fallen like balm upon her troubled mind. No need to kill herself now, but, strange to say, this thought carried with it just the most shadowy touch of regret. The anticipation of Senior's great sorrow at her tragic death had been no small gratification. She put her arms round him and kissed him. "How long, Jack, will you be away?" she asked.

"Oh, it all depends; not less than three months anyway, but no longer than I can help."

"Three months! Oh, what a long time!" she said, in a tone of disappointment.

"Well," he said "you see, the passages there and back will take at least six weeks, and I can't spend less than another six weeks at home. My people will naturally want to see a little of me after all these years. Then there will be some things to go into, I suppose, you know, about the property left me."

Next, as the thought suddenly occurred to him, he added, "Oh, I'll tell you what you must do while I am away. You'll have to get a governess, and see how much you can learn by the time I come back, eh?"

Cheeky turned this over in her mind. Yes, the idea gave her great pleasure; she would study, oh, so hard, and astonish him by wonderful results when he returned.

She felt now that even if she had the choice she would sooner almost that he went away for a short time. Would she not work during his absence! She would surprise him. A governess, too; what fun! Just like a real lady. Then she thought of her writing on the table, still unlooked at by him, and which was the best she had yet done. She had taken such extraordinary pains, simply because he had gone out, and she wanted to give him a pleasant surprise when he came home. So it would be when he came back from England.

"Jack," she said, "you have not looked at my writing lesson this morning yet." They both rose and went to the table. Senior, who was anxious now to cheer Cheeky up, and also saw a decided improvement, commenced to praise the writing extravagantly. "It was almost like copperplate," he said.

Cheeky laughed merrily. "But just wait until you come back from England," she said; "just you wait, then you will see."

Once more he took her in his arms and kissed her. He felt he loved her now with all his heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER their holiday, Searight and May Leslie installed themselves in Mosetenstine's luxuriously-fitted house in Du Toits Pan Road. Care was taken by May Leslie to have it at once spread about that the object of their visit to Natal had been to get married there, and that she was now Mrs. Searight. In the rôle of a married woman she discreetly assumed a certain dignity. Searight, on the other hand, seemed inclined to be somewhat reticent regarding the marriage. It was a different thing, he thought, to have the kudos of having such a splendid woman for his mistress, to having people believe he had actually taken her to himself as his wife. In spite of her opinion and his concurrence that it would be advisable for them to give out that they were man and wife, so as to be the better able to work Foxnisky, the detective, still Searight, not really wishing this to be believed,

volunteered no information. His vanity was against it. The general opinion was that the wedding had taken place, and that his diffidence was due to his being snob enough to be ashamed of his wife.

Searight was incapable of any deep affection, and his love—if it could be called by such a name—for May Leslie had burnt itself out already. The girl's deep absorbing passion, her loving caresses, only wearied and irritated him, and he became peevish and ill-natured towards her. But this, instead of lessening, only served to increase her infatuation. She even experienced a feeling of pleasure when he, in fits of bad temper, swore at her.

Heart and soul May Leslie set to work to accomplish one object—amass in as short a time as possible a sufficient sum of money to secure for herself and lover a life of independence and luxury in some other country to be afterwards decided upon. With marvellous assiduity and consummate tact, she applied herself to extend her operations in the illicit diamond trade on a gigantic scale. She was naturally ambitious, and now she determined to be the greatest and richest I.D.B. the Fields ever knew. Ikey Mosetenstine would not be "in it" with her! Not only did she find substitutes for the Kaffir thieves in her service, when, as usual, after making some money, they departed for their own country, there to buy themselves wives and cattle, and remain in blessed idleness for the rest of their lives, but she increased the number of boys planted in the mines from seventy to two hundred and fifty.

Accompanied by Charley and another boy, she, in a cart and four horses, took long trips in the direction of Basutoland. The Basutos, as a race, not only supplied the Diamond Fields with most of its labour, but they were also well known by the I.D.B.s to make the most skilful thieves, and at the same time the least treacherous. On such missions, May Leslie took with her a small keg of Cape brandy and a brightly-coloured blanket. Whenever they met a batch of natives wending their way towards Kimberley, she would get Charley to hail them and fraternise with them. He told them all the Kimberley news regarding wages, &c., and to identify himself as one of their brothers he asked them all about his own particular friends and relations. Then they would be invited to partake of the

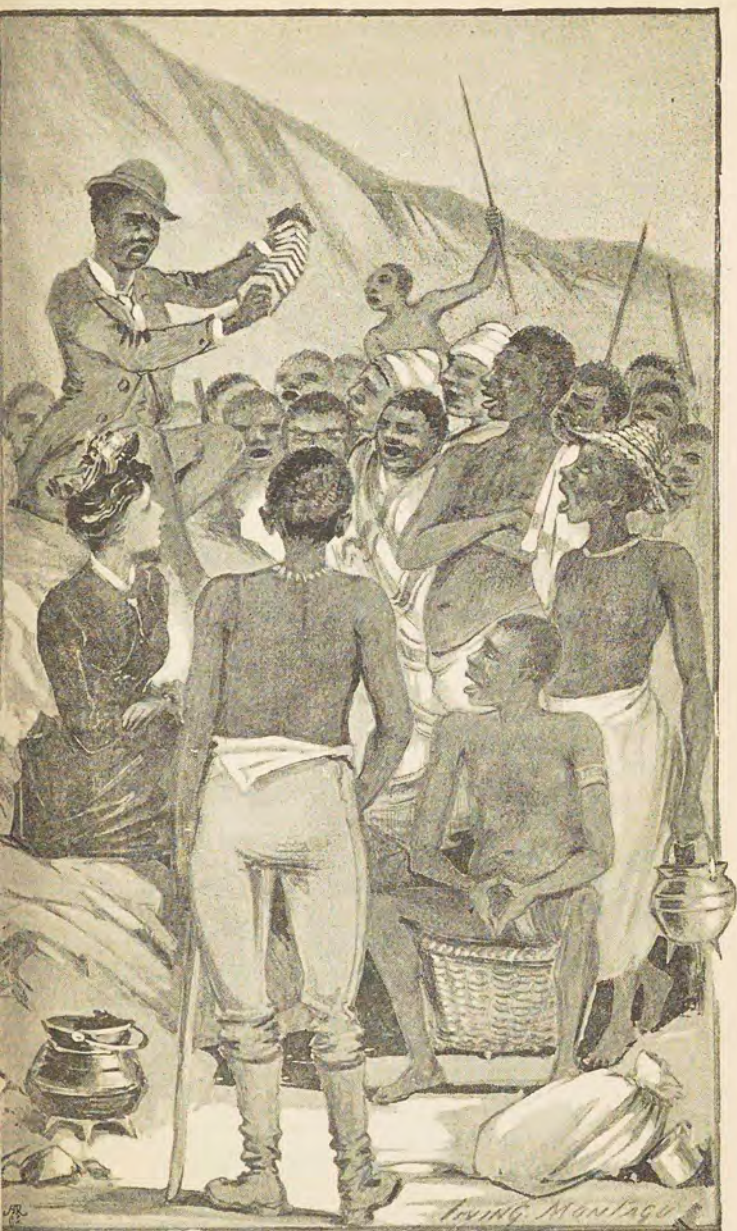
Cape brandy. After this Charley would out-span the horses. Unlike the majority of African blacks, he eschewed bright colours, and wore dark clothes, a small black felt hat, stand-up collar, and a white tie. He always greatly impressed them by this exceptional style of dress. After the horses had been given some forage, he got his concertina, and, perching on some rise or big boulder by the roadside, would commence to sing psalms, accompanying himself on the instrument. The Basutos were nearly all Christians, for their delightful and productive country was the favourite field of the many missionaries who were sent out from home to spread the Gospel.

Singing the natives excelled and delighted in. They were taught this accomplishment by the indefatigable wives and daughters of the missionaries. As Charley played they would gather round him, and when, cheered by the libations of Cape brandy, reminded by the sacred songs of the homes left behind, tired and wearied though they might be, they would soon join in. It was a striking sight.

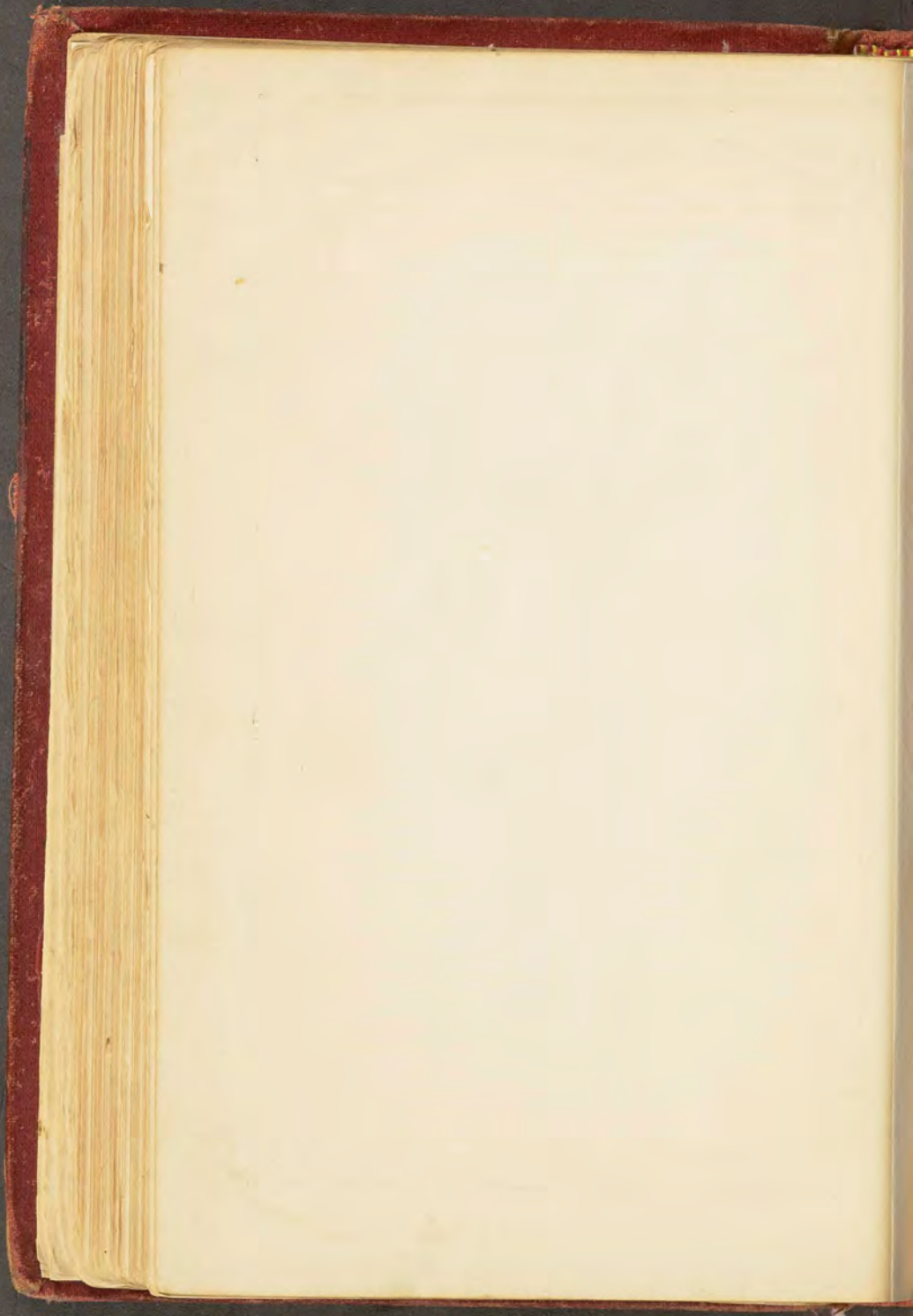
Any stranger passing by would have thought that the well-dressed Charley was a Kaffir missionary, leading, with sweet tenor voice, his half-clothed coloured brethren in songs of praise unto their Heavenly Father. Little would he have dreamt that it was only part of a scheme to entice these unsuspecting Africans to become thieves, to steal for the benefit of that pretty, quietly-dressed girl, who stood listening with pleased and softly-lulled senses to the solemn-sounding music of the voices.

Then suddenly Charley would play the air of a war dance, and in a short time they would all, whilst accompanying themselves in a deep-sounding, monotonous chant, caper about in a great state of excitement, like wild fiends, with all their savage instincts aroused.

After this came Charley's legerdemain performance, which surprised and terrorised them. That he did it by supernatural aid they firmly believed. The trick he wound up with mystified and pleased them most. First he would, after turning the lining out of his hat, pass it round to show them that he had nothing concealed therein, and then, with his back to the cart, and the boy whom they took with them holding the hat, he would produce a most wonderful lot of things, the last articles



As Charley played they would gather round him, when, cheered by the libations of Cape brandy, reminded by the sacred songs of the homes left behind, tired and wearied though they might be, they soon joined in.— Page 154.



being a large number of gaudy coloured handkerchiefs, which, as he drew them forth one by one, to their great delight, he scattered amongst them.

After this performance he made a speech, the substance of which was that this beautiful white woman, pointing to May Leslie, whose slave he was, was a great chieftainess from England. All the land on which they found the diamonds in Kimberley really belonged to her, and bad white men had cheated her out of it; but one day she would get it all back, as she was a wonderful woman, and had great power from Heaven. All the things that he had done were simply through the spiritual aid she gave him. She loved the black men, and had purposely come out to welcome and invite them to come and stay at a place she had bought for the poor tired Kaffirs to rest themselves for a few days after their arrival on the Fields. The brightly-coloured blanket would then be presented to the petty chief in whose care the Basutos were placed by the paramount one, to see them safely to and from the land of precious stones. Then the boy May Leslie brought with her would be left to conduct the Kaffirs on their arrival at the Fields to a compound, an old livery-stable that she had purchased for the purpose in Bultfontein. As soon as they turned up, Charley, in obedience to orders from his mistress, would have cooked for them quantities of mealie meal and meat. A little delicate forethought, highly appreciated, was the present of some pounds of fat to rub on their legs and feet, which were always tired, stiff, and sore after their long tramp. After resting for a day or two, the natives would go out to seek for employment at the different mines; but the petty chief would remain and live in idleness at the compound, bribed by a liberal weekly salary to use his influence to get all the boys that were sent under his charge to bring the diamonds they found to the beautiful white woman who had treated them so well.

Foxnisky was a frequent and welcome visitor at the house in Du Toits Pan Road. He generally called at the time Searight was absent. May Leslie, so far as he was concerned, had not over-estimated her powers of attraction; and, like a siren, she allured him into a hopeless infatuation. She treated him as a great friend, and apparently made him her confidant in everything. She

asked his advice about even the most trifling things. She played and sang to him his favourite songs. Any vexation that he had he told her about: and on several occasions she made intelligent and valuable suggestions, that helped him not a little. This woman's friendship became very soon almost a necessity of his existence.

A very severe law had been passed a couple of years before in the Free State to try and crush out I.D.B. there, the maximum punishment for the crime being £2,000 fine, twenty years' penal servitude, one hundred lashes, and the power to expel any person convicted—even in Griqualand West, of which Kimberley is the capital. But the Free State judges interpreted this ordinance as only applying to within six miles of any proclaimed diggings in the State. Several of the Griqualand West I.D.B.s took advantage of this, and established a small village just across the boundary that divided that territory from the Free State. They gave to it the somewhat appropriate name of "Free Town," and there they bought with impunity. The detective department, however, in order to harass and hinder their traffic as much as possible, had mounted-men stationed along the border, whose duty it was to stop and search any persons whom they might suspect of conveying illicit diamonds across to the Free State. The bigger I.D.B.s in Kimberley employed men whom they called "runners" to run the blockade with parcels of diamonds. These runners were generally the smaller I.D.B. fry, who made a living in all kinds of crooked ways. As a rule they were inveterate gamblers, and in a chronic state of impecuniosity. For the sake of getting a few pounds with which to tempt Dame Fortune to smile upon them in games of chance, they would stake years of liberty by running the risk of capture. Kaffirs, too, were employed in the same kind of work, generally making their attempt at running the blockade during the night. The white ones usually tried it during the day on horseback, and many were the exciting chases between them and the mounted policemen or detectives.

Every conceivable dodge was tried to get the illicit stones safely out of Griqualand West into the Free State, the Transvaal, or Natal, the last-named colony having refused to co-operate with the Cape Colony in suppressing

the nefarious trade. Cape carts had hollow places cunningly made in the woodwork; horses and dogs were made the means of conveying the stolen diamonds across the border in their stomachs; fruit was used for the purpose; women had patent bustles and other articles of dress made for the concealment of the gems; fish-baskets returning to the colony presumably empty, sometimes had parcels of diamonds secured to the bottom of the inside; books with holes cut, and the leaves filled up with diamonds, were sent by post; patent hollow boot-heels were made. Some runners swallowed the precious stones and openly crossed the border without the slightest fear of detection. But all these ingenious tricks became known to the detectives through the large number of informers employed by them. These informers were mostly I.D.B.s themselves. To induce these miserable wretches to act the part of Judas towards their brothers in crime, their services, according to the value of the information, were highly paid, and care taken that their names were never divulged. They, as well as being in the pay of the authorities, carried on their illicit trade with impunity. The I.D.B. fraternity was, of course, aware of the system of espionage that flourished in their midst; but notwithstanding this, and the great risk they ran in carrying on their criminal mode of gaining a most precarious livelihood, they were notorious for their indiscretion in talking about their business—so vain were they of their sharpness in eluding the law. May Leslie recognised the fact that, no matter how careful and silent she might be about her violation of the law, in a very short time the detective department would be cognisant that she was an I.D.B. She employed no runners—the trustworthy Charley in the dead of night used to take all her “stuff” across into the Free State; but then there were those who bought, and knew whence it came, and of course they talked about their business one to the other, wherefore it was bound to come out. She accordingly determined to do her best to entangle the celebrated detective Foxnisky in the web of her charms as speedily as possible, and then to make him an accomplice. This done she could work with almost perfect safety.

It was not long before she gave him to understand that she had made a mistake in marrying Searight. All his

great expectations, she asserted, had turned out to be mere deceit on his part, and he was simply a penniless adventurer. She had discovered, too, since her marriage, that he was a man of violent temper, and that there was an indescribable something about him that made her dread him.

Not long after this confession of disappointment in her husband, Foxnisky, coming in one day, found her gloomy and sad. Searight, who had but that moment left her, had said something most unkind to her, over which she was now fretting. She was on the point of sobbing when the detective entered. Why did she look so sorrowful? he wanted to know. Although she despised him, his tone of sympathy made her burst into tears.

"What is it?" he asked soothingly. "I will help you if you are in any trouble."

In the midst of her grief she saw her opportunity. She forced herself to think of Searight's late unkindness, and thus encouraged her sobs and tears, which were perfectly genuine. "Oh!" she gasped hysterically, "I can't tell you. You would never speak to me again, you would forsake me for ever. Oh, I'm sure you would; but it is not my fault—not my fault!"

Foxnisky, who was truly moved at the depth of grief shown by the woman of whom he was now so passionately fond, replied, "My dear Mrs. Searight, don't you know me better? No matter what scrape you have got into, or what you have done, or may do, you know I shall always be a friend to you. Now tell me, what is the matter? Come, now, what is it?"

She took away the handkerchief from her eyes and looked at him with tear-stained face.

"Oh, Mr. Foxnisky," she said, "will you swear that you won't lose your friendship for me? Will you swear never to tell anyone a single word if I tell you?"

"What! can you doubt me?"

But she insisted on his solemnly swearing what she desired. Then, drying her eyes, she told him that Searight was ill-treating her more and more every day, and that since their return from Natal, having no other means of bringing grist to the mill, he had insisted on her buying diamonds illicitly. She had refused for some time, but at length she had given way out of fear of violence. Now,

she went on, it was not because she thought it was so very wrong that she grieved so much over it—was not everyone in Kimberley connected, more or less, with I.D.B.? She certainly did not like it, and she must confess she greatly dreaded the risk she ran, but what had worried her most was the thought of losing his friendship. It was about the only solace she had left.

Foxnisky, whom already disquieting rumours had reached regarding this fair criminal, was silent for some time, and May Leslie gazed anxiously at him. This man was doubtless a smart detective, but he was human after all, and had become hopelessly ensnared in her toils. Her grief had been so poignant, and so thoroughly sincere too, and a man is always inclined to accept as truth—especially if it be flattering to himself—what a woman he loves says. Everything she had spoken he believed. From a moral point of view she suffered nothing in his eyes. Familiarity with this branch of crime made him think but little of its moral aspect, but, like a butcher who takes pride in his work, he liked to carry out his duties cleanly and well, irrespective of the feelings of those who suffered through his expedition. The thought that troubled him now, was that others in the same department as himself might learn of it and attempts be made to trap her. He trembled when he thought of it. If her husband could only be got out of the way! The thought was rapture! He very mildly hinted at this, but, to his astonishment, the idea seemed most repugnant to her. However much Searight ill-treated her, she must remember he was her husband, she said. And, another thing, any disgrace that befell him would reflect upon her. Foxnisky, even though infatuated, was a little puzzled at this woman making so much fuss about such kind of disgrace. Had she not been the mistress of the most notorious I.D.B. in Kimberley? But she was evidently soft-hearted, for though Mosetenstine had struck her, and she hated him, still she had refused a large reward to give a little assistance towards trapping him. At length an idea occurred to him—he could make out to his chief that he had secured her services as an informer. Could he not credit her with information which he himself found out?

Informers who were at all useful, no matter how much

they bought illicitly themselves, were never interfered with. Only the most unprincipled scoundrels could be obtained for this secret service. If only those were employed who were too honest to go in for I.D.B., whom could they get to do this mean work? In fact, it was through the immunity from danger that they got so many I.D.B.s to inform on their comrades, the knowledge that their own safety depended a great deal on their services forcing them to give useful information from time to time.

Foxnisky's mind was made up to adopt this course. He held out his hand; she took it, as a genuine look of gladness displaced the one of anxiety.

"Never mind," he said, "don't be anxious. I shall always be your friend."

CHAPTER XIX.

CHEEKY was very soon at home in the bosom of Mr. Travers' highly respectable family at Cape Town. No questions had been asked as to the young girl's antecedents, Mr. Travers being satisfied that his young friend, Senior, would introduce no one whom he should not.

The girl was well provided for, Senior having left with her the sum of £80, and now sending a draft of £10 every month. In each letter he was expecting to return to South Africa, but something was always turning up at the last moment to prevent this. Cheeky, however, was not very impatient, for, much to her own satisfaction, she had secured, by means of an advertisement, carefully worded by Senior before his departure, the services of a lady to instruct her two hours daily in the various branches of rudimentary education. And was she not making gigantic efforts to astonish him with results?

She was apparently fortunate in her teacher, this lady being not only accomplished, but having the *entrée* to the very best houses in Cape Town. Violet Gwendolen Leon-More was the lady's name. Her father, John Leon-More, had begun life in South Africa as a salesman in a

grocer's store in Port Elizabeth. By careful application the salesman in five years was a flourishing retail merchant, and it was not long before he, by judicious and lucky speculation in wool and ostrich feathers, became a leading man, and one of the richest, in that enterprising city of the eastern province. At length, retiring from business, he went to live in the more aristocratic city of Cape Town, wishing to be amongst his wife's relations, having married into one of the oldest and best Dutch families, the Vonderbooms. Mr. More purchased a fine house and grounds in the suburb of Rondebosch, added a hyphen to his name, lived for some time in a state of luxury, and eventually became the member in the Legislative Council for Salt River. But the happiness anticipated in the possession of his wealth was not realised. A man of few resources, he missed the excitement of speculation; and the fact that there were a few merchants in Cape Town wealthier than he made him somewhat dissatisfied. So, the diamond-scrip mania breaking out about this time, he was tempted into speculation again. But, alas! being so far away from the scene of operations he had little opportunity of using that judgment which had before been considered so sound—in truth, he might have as well gambled away his money on any other game of chance. Diamonds ruined him, financially and morally. With his fortune gone, all heart was lost. Taking to hard drinking, in two years' time he died, leaving behind a widow, a son, and a daughter. A furnished cottage in Rondebosch, belonging to Mrs. Leon-More, alone was left of the wreck, and in it the deceased man's family took up their abode.

Albert Reginald, the son, through influence got into the Civil Service, and was now in the receipt of £14 per month. He dutifully gave his mother every penny of his salary, and on this small income she, a simple, homely lady, kept up a good appearance, attending personally to the minutiae of the management of her household.

The verdict of the officers of the 190th Regiment, stationed then at Cape Town, was that Violet Gwendolen Leon-More was "a deuced pretty girl, and had a devilish fine figure." When a prince of the Royal Blood in England says a certain woman is pretty, she is ever after regarded as a Beauty; and when the officers of a regiment stationed in South Africa pass an equally complimentary judgment, it

has much the same effect, as the Cape people look upon these red-coated warriors as representatives of the English aristocracy—though, to speak truth, the officers of the gallant 190th were originally very ordinary middle-class men, who meritoriously struggled hard to come out all right on their meagre pay.

Violet was known amongst her acquaintances as an extremely sentimental girl, so easily moved to tears that she would weep when reading the pathetic parts of novels, and whom it was absolutely inconvenient to accompany to the theatre when a piece was being played calculated to affect the tender emotions. But, strange to say, when Mrs. Leon-More was down with fever, not only all the house-work, but even the nursing, devolved upon Sophy, the off-coloured maid-of-all-work. Sparker, of the 190th, had just begun to be attentive at that time. Though not assisting the mother much in the discharge of household duties, it was mainly due to the daughter that the social position of the family was maintained after the father's losses. Making herself agreeable, with ready tact, to the right people, dancing well, playing well, possessing a mezzo-soprano voice of sympathetic quality, and enjoying the enviable reputation of being one of the Cape Town beauties, all made her in great request at social gatherings. During her teens—she was now twenty-three—Violet had enjoyed the benefit of a three years' expensive schooling in England. On the strength of this she frequently alluded to "dear old England," and constantly made disparaging remarks about the Colony and those born in it. Her stay in England had been the means of her losing that peculiar inflection of voice common to the Colonial—sounding pleasantly enough out of South Africa, but in it suggesting by association the coloured classes of the population. Though idealistic, this girl professed to be an Atheist. Having read a book on Free Thought someone had lent her brother, and being of an impressionable nature, she had at once been convinced that all religion was a fallacy, founded on mere traditions. She was rather proud of her new-born opinions, taking credit for independence of thought, and frequently awing her girlfriends with her audacity in speaking contemptuously of the Christian Faith.

One morning, when reading the *Cape Times*, she saw

Cheeky's advertisement. It set her pondering. Was not the strain great under the grinding necessity of having to appear always well dressed? What ingenuity was not required to show her mother how to turn and do up her old dresses over and over again! A monthly salary, even though small, would be such a help! Would it be possible for her to accept this kind of employment without incurring social loss? She might, at all events, go and see who the person was. If she then thought the situation undesirable, she could easily pretend that her inquiries were on account of some governess out of a situation, whom she wished to befriend.

Before luncheon Violet had found her way to Loop Street. When she discovered the prospective pupil was a peculiarly interesting young girl, who knew none of her set, she offered to take the situation and was accepted on the spot. Fearing anything might be heard of her teaching engagement, she took the precaution of telling her friends quite a little romance. She had come across such a pretty girl, who, though quite grown up, could hardly read or write. Her father had died when she was a child, leaving her to the care of a stepmother, who had completely neglected her. Her relations in England, finding this out, had sent her money to come home; but the poor girl was so sensitive about her ignorance, and so afraid of venturing amongst her father's people, that she had taken pity on her, and was doing her best to make her presentable; she added that her rapid advancement was marvellous, and that it was quite touching to see the poor thing's heartfelt gratitude. In truth, Violet, who had the gift of explaining and imparting, was really surprised at the progress made, and her vanity was so flattered thereby that, in spite of a tendency to laziness, she did her very utmost to get the girl on.

Besides the ordinary daily studies, she gave her pupil instruction as to how a lady should dress, on the blending of colours, what suited the different shades of complexion, and in general deportment. The governess often came in from Rondebosch in the evenings, and got Cheeky to read to her for hours out of some sentimental work, to help, she said, to develop the tender feelings of the other's nature. She would lie down on Cheeky's bed correcting her pupil's pronunciation from time to time.

And to inculcate good precepts, she would hold forth on the true nobility of character, the importance of honesty, truthfulness, and purity.

At first Cheeky thought that her teacher must be a splendid character, just such another as she imagined Helen Senior to be; and there is no doubt but that these fine sentiments helped in a measure to develop the good within the young uncultured girl; but Cheeky was observant. It was not long before she discovered that Violet did not practise what she preached, and, notwithstanding all her lofty sentiments and professed regard for truth, that she was often both selfish and untruthful. Violet tried to infect the young girl with her atheistical belief, but Cheeky would have none of it. Had not Jack told her it was all true about the good Saviour? One day she said to her teacher in a quiet but firm tone, "Please, Miss Leon-More, don't talk to me any more in that way, because I don't like it, and I—I—cannot listen to you."

What struck everyone who saw the teacher and pupil together was the wonderful likeness between them, even to their voices. Frequently they were taken for sisters. They were both brunettes, and the shape of their faces was much alike; but what made the resemblance the most striking was that each had a short upper lip, partially exposing the teeth. But Violet's brown eyes had a tinge of green close to the pupils, which gave the otherwise comely face a touch of hardness. Cheeky's face, too, was slightly longer, her complexion more delicate, her figure more lithe and slender, and it was curious that, in spite of birth and education, the ex-barmaid seemed the more refined-looking of the two.

By far the pleasantest part of this little girl's life now was the receiving of the weekly letter from Senior. With what excitement would she rush to the post-office when she heard the mail was in! How she would read each epistle over and over again! The childish pleasure she had in the novelty of getting letters addressed to "Miss Smirker"! The pride she had at being able to read them without any help!

However, at the end of six months, she was plunged suddenly into despair. The letters ceased coming. Week after week she went to the post-office, but each time the

answer "No" was given to her inquiry. Then she would hurry home with pale anxious face, lock herself in her room, and give vent to a flood of tears.

Violet, seeing there was something wrong, pressed and pressed the girl to tell her what it was. Six weeks passed, however, before the teacher was taken, and then only partially, into the other's confidence.

"A young gentleman," Cheeky said, "took pity on me because I was so ignorant, and it is he who has been paying for my board and lodging, and your teaching—and—and everything else. Well, he used to write to me every week until a month and a half ago, when all of a sudden his letters stopped. Oh! what do you think can be the matter?"

Violet, her curiosity aroused, submitted the girl to a searching cross-examination, but the latter would not answer her questions, thinking that the teacher, simply because she was a lady and not used to such things, would be shocked if told that she and Jack had lived together without being married, as poor people so often did.

"But, Lizzie, is he going to marry you, that he takes such an interest in you?" asked Violet.

The other did not answer, but continued, with almost unconscious cunning, "Oh! I do not know what would have become of me if it had not been for him. It was he who first told me all about Jesus dying on the Cross for me and all poor sinners."

This effectually put Violet off the scent. She thought, "Oh, some religious enthusiast, probably, a member of the Y.M.C.A.; some fool who, struck by the girl's pretty face, thought it his duty to try and save her soul." Piqued to think that after all there was so little romance in the affair, she suggested in turn, as the cause of Senior's silence, inconstancy, illness, and death, succeeding in making the poor girl quite ill; and then, her sympathy being aroused by the woe-begone looks, she took pity on her. "You give me," she said, "his address, and I'll guarantee to find out what is the matter."

Cheeky did so. The address Senior had left was that of his elder brother, a clergyman in Eightstone, Kent.

Violet then wrote the following letter:—

"Cape Town, December 1st, 188—.

"The Rev. Henry W. Senior.

"DEAR SIR,—I am at present nursing M. E. Smirker, a very great friend of your brother, Mr. John Senior. As no answer has been received to several letters written, the patient, whose mind is very weak, through illness of a serious nature, is fretting in such a way as greatly interferes with the prospect of recovery.

"If you would be good enough to send out to us at once full information as to your brother's health and whereabouts, you would indeed be conferring a great kindness upon poor M. E. Smirker.—I am, yours sincerely,

"VIOLET GWENDOLEN LEON-MORE."

Violet used, as she thought, great tact in wording this letter, as by avoiding the use of pronouns and only putting an "M." before the E. Smirker the sex had not been disclosed. If John Senior had not taken his brother into his confidence about the little girl, whose expenses in living, etc., he had been defraying, why then it might get the good-natured young man into a scrape, and make the parson think no end of things—perhaps rightly, even, for all she knew.

"Lizzie," she said, after the letter was posted, "I'll bet you a new pair of gloves—no," looking down at her feet and suddenly remembering her shoes were shabby, "a pair of *boots* that we get an answer telling us all about your Christian John in six weeks—or, say seven."

"Oh, very well," returned the other, scarcely understanding. "Any news would be better than none at all."

CHAPTER XX.

THE departure of the English mail-steamer is a weekly event of importance in Cape Town: there was nothing unusual in the large number of people this day at the docks to see that good sea-boat, the "*Cicero*," commanded by Captain Holdon, take her departure for England.

Hansom cabs, with their white roofs, peculiar to Cape

Town, were arriving every minute. Malay porters, with badges on arm, were busy carrying luggage on board. Steam-winches were making a deafening din as they hoisted in the last of the cargo, and passengers' luggage for the hold. A continual stream of people was going up and down the companion-way of the first cabin. The quarter-deck was thronged, the saloon crowded, mostly by the friends of the comparatively few passengers who were homeward bound, and the many idlers, who came from mere force of habit. The small tables in the saloon were all occupied by parties drinking "*bon voyage*" to their departing friends. Champagne corks were popping freely; everybody seemed to be talking at the same time; the second last bell having gone, they were making the best of the short time still left. Saloon stewards were running from and to the bar with laden or empty trays; bedroom stewards were showing people their cabins, the little poky domiciles they had to put up with for the next three weeks, to which were being conveyed the boxes and portmanteaux containing the clothing and other articles necessary for use during the passage. Children, stimulated by their new surroundings, were playing, and quickly making friends, in happy indifference to the social status of their respective mammas and papas. Amongst those about to brave the dangers of the deep could be discerned the sad faces of such as were leaving behind them well-beloved friends or relations, the bored faces of those to whom the sea voyage was the reverse of a novelty—who had frequently to endure its monotony on business bent; and the glad, expectant faces of others going home for a holiday, to seek the luxurious enjoyments only to be obtained in Europe.

Sitting at one of the tables in the after part of the saloon were two young girls and a slender, sloping-shouldered young man of dandified appearance. The elder of the two girls had on a well-fitting dress of pink zephyr, trimmed with imitation cream lace, and a little sailor hat with a velvet band; the younger wore a plainly-made black cashmere, with a baby bodice, and a black straw poke bonnet, trimmed but slightly with black velvet, the head-dress giving to her face a quaint childish look. She seemed rather quiet and sad, whilst the other two chatted gaily.

At length the young dandy turned round and addressed her. He spoke with that disagreeable, conversation-impeding affectation adopted by so many middle-class young men, who think it a highly aristocratic accomplishment. After nearly every other word he made use of an exclamation that sounded like "aw," and he omitted his "r's," but as these peculiarities are almost as unpleasant to read as to listen to, the reader will be spared their reproduction.

"I hope, Miss Smirker, you will have a very pleasant passage. Do you know anyone on board? No? Ah, what a pity! but one soon gets to know people on board ship, don't you know; in fact, often too soon and too well. There are not very many passengers, are there? You see, it is a little too early; a month or two later you would be having a crowd, going to get the summer at home. There is always more fun, don't you know, when there are lots of people. By-the-by, I know a couple of fellows going with you, Captain Bouncer, of the Engineers, and Clotts, of the Royal Artillery. Clotts has just come round from Natal, you know; been stationed there with his battery some time. They are both going home on leave. Would you care to know them? It might be as well; it would be somebody for a start, anyhow."

"Oh! that will be so nice, Mr. Sparker," chimed in the elder of the two, who was no other than Violet Leon-More. And then she whispered to her late pupil, "They will be gentlemen, anyway; you want to get to know as many well-bred people as you can; it is all education, and you will feel the less awkward when you come amongst Mr. Senior's people." Then aloud, she went on, "One does meet such dreadful people on board ship. I remember the last time I came out" (she had only done the voyage once), "we had such a mixed lot: butchers, bakers, canteen-keepers, and all sorts."

"You are about right," returned Sparker; "some deuced queer people travel between here and England; but I wonder where those two Johnnies are? I bet you the beggars are somewhere near the bar." He laughed at the racy wit he thought contained in the suggestion.

"Will you please excuse me for a couple of minutes? I'll just go down and try to find them."

"Oh, my dear Lizzie," broke in Violet, after he had gone, "I feel quite sad, you know, because you are going to leave me. And what a wild goose chase it may be, too! Perhaps Mr. Senior will be quite better, and on his way out here again, or to some other country. It is so awfully plucky of you, and so delightfully romantic. Oh, I do hope you will find him at home when you get there. What on earth will you do if he is gone? Why, he might even be dead! I wonder what his people will think about a young girl like you coming home on his account. Most probably they will be terribly shocked; people are so funny at home, and there is so much prejudice, so much caste, in England. As far as appearance goes, you would pass for a lady, you would indeed. You are considered very like me; in fact, we are always taken for sisters by those who do not know us; and I should at least look like a lady, considering my family and the way I have been brought up, the society I have always mixed in, and the education I have received. You have a nice soft voice, and you speak well—grammatically, I mean. You are decidedly pretty, and that does go such a long way; but your greatest drawback is your total want of accomplishments, and your being so far back in education for a girl of your age—nearly seventeen, are you not? Though you have really done wonders in so short a time! You have a nice voice, if it were only trained. Being able to sing well is the most attractive accomplishment a girl can have. I shall be so curious to hear how you get on at home; you know, you'll mystify them. They won't know what to make of it, a young girl like you going all the way from South Africa, without any chaperon, too, simply because a certain young man is ill, to whom you are not even engaged. As I told you before, I'm afraid they won't receive you. You must be sure to write to Mr. Senior as soon as you get to London. Wire, that is your best plan, something like this: 'From E. Smirker to Henry Senior. How is your brother? Acquaint him of my arrival.' Then if he is better and you must go to him, you must simply tell the truth, that Mr. Senior has been educating you, and all the rest of it, and that out of gratitude you have come all the way home to help to nurse him; they must be touched by that!" Violet wiped away a moistness from her eyes. "Oh, I should do just the same if I were placed in your position," and

the sentimental young lady sighed, wishing she had the opportunity.

Cheeky listened attentively, but made no comment; her mind was bewildered by the step she was taking.

"Oh! there is Miss Hernon. Excuse me just for a second, I wish to speak to her about something," said Violet, and she crossed over to the other end of the saloon.

Sparker's two friends were, as he surmised, at the bar. Some of the officers stationed in Cape Town, and half a dozen young civilians, glad to be seen in such select company, were with them; all were very much in the way of the saloon stewards, who were having constant occasion to get near that place of refreshment to fulfil orders.

The liberal Bob Styles—a junior partner in a rising firm of merchants—was, as usual, to the fore on an occasion of this sort, and doing his best to speed his parting soldier friends in a fitting way. He insisted on ordering bottle after bottle of champagne, in consequence of which the whole party was quickly getting merry.

Malone, a good-looking Irishman, with aquiline nose and heavy red moustache, a clerk in the Custom House, speaking with a thick Irish brogue—he always did when unduly exhilarated—gave it as his opinion, "You fellows, by Gorrah! have the devil's own luck to be going home now, and turning your back on this fearful and terrible country, the last one that God made, and has been repinting the same ever since. Oh! the toime I would have if I was only going wid you, and a cheque for a couple of thou' in my breeches pocket. Oh! the Alhambra! the Trocadero! the Pavilion! the gurls, me bhoy. Bouncer, you divil, won't you change wid me? Let me go home instid of you, and you take moy place."

Freeder, a colonial-born youth, a clerk in the Standard Bank, who had never as yet had the honour of setting foot in England, unpatriotically said, "By Jove! Malone, you are just right, and I wish I were going along with you."

"You!" returned the other, "what the devil would you do at home? You would be lost entoirely, you would go mad, clane mad; I would just loike to see you now at the Alhambra, seeing a thousand gurls in toights, dancing a ballet all at the same toime, and six or seven thousand of

the prettiest gurls in the world, walking up and down the promenade, winking at ye. Sure, you would niver be contint to live in Cape Town aftherwards." Everyone laughed heartily at this, and Freeder, looking much embarrassed, replied, "Oh, don't you believe it. I have heard so much about all that sort of thing, that I would not be so surprised as you think."

"Oh, go along wid you now," returned the other, "'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise;' you stay in the land of your birth, me bhoy. What do you say, Bouncer?"

That individual shook his head knowingly.

"Well, 'It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all,'" suggested Browne, the magistrate's clerk. "I should shoot myself if I thought I had to remain all my life in this bally hole." Browne's last appointment at home had been a clerkship in a shipping broker's office, at a salary of twenty-two shillings per week, and hours from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m. His uncle, the Mayor of Cape Town, had got him his present billet, one he had been most glad to accept; and the society he now mixed in, much to his great joy, was a step decidedly above what he had been accustomed to at home.

Clotts, noted for a wild exuberance of animal spirits, began—as was a frequent custom of his when in the stage he had now arrived at—bashing in, with his cane, the hats of his civilian friends, taking care, however, to leave that of Malone unmolested; the Irishman's fierce-looking eyes distinctly warned him that such a practical joke would be resented. The others, like good-natured gentlemanly fellows as they were, laughed, though rather in a forced manner, and pretended to enjoy the fun of this young officer, to whom they had only lately been introduced.

But Sparker, coming up at this moment, and hailing Clotts and Bouncer in these words: "Hillo! you fellows, where the deuce have you been? I have been looking all over the shop for you," was the means of putting a stop to Clotts' mischievous amusement.

Bob Styles shoved a tumbler of champagne in his hand, and Sparker went on: "I say, you Johnnies, I am going to do you a good turn; I have picked up something devilish choice, I can tell you, something that is going home with you, and all by itself, too. Look, there it is—

there," and he pointed out little Cheeky sitting in a corner.

"Now, if you promise to be good boys, I'll introduce you."

"She is, man sure! just a pretty little gurl," Malone said.

"By Gad! but she *is* a nice little thing," Bob Styles remarked, "something like that friend of yours, Sparker. Is she any relation? You know whom I mean, that Miss Leon-More."

Clotts said, "I am all there, Sparker, but who is she? She is not surely going home all alone?"

"Yes, she is."

"Is she supposed to be a lady?"

"No, hardly. You see, some Johnnie, I believe, picked her up, and started to educate her, and now he is sending her home to get her properly finished off. Some old fool, I think it is. I suppose he intends either marrying her or adopting her—something of the sort."

"By Jove! this is interesting," broke in Bouncer.

"Introduce us, by all means; never mind young Clotts here, one is quite enough. If he behaves himself, perhaps I'll give him a show afterwards," and catching hold of Sparker's arm he walked him off in Cheeky's direction.

"Oh! no, let us start fair, Bouncer; no handicaps," said Clotts, as he immediately took Sparker's other arm, and between them they marched the latter right in front of the girl, nearly falling on her from the impetuous way they came up, and attracting the attention of the whole saloon. Neither Clotts nor Bouncer really intended to be rude; they were both, under the influence of wine, somewhat inclined to show off before their friends, who were laughing admiringly at their "cool cheek," and no doubt the information that the girl was not a lady had had its effect. When within a couple of yards, so as to favourably impress her, Bouncer had said, and in a tone loud enough for her to hear, "What a pretty little girl!"

Poor little Cheeky had received no little comfort and pleasure from Violet's lately expressed opinion that in appearance, at least, she would pass for a gentlewoman. Was not her great aim to be like Senior's sister—not only a good woman, but refined, too! A pang of disappointment went straight to her heart when she saw the rude way that Sparker and his friends came up to her now that she was by herself. She read in it that they could, after all,

detect that she was but an ill-bred girl, to whom, they probably thought, they could say anything. Tears rose to her eyes; she forced them back; she must, anyhow, even if she did not look a lady, behave like one:

Sparker perceived the displeased look on her face, and wished himself out of it. However, there was nothing for it but to introduce his friends, and he did so. Both bowed, and Clotts said something about being awfully glad that she was going home in the same ship. Bouncer held out his hand. Cheeky felt nervous and puzzled how to act. Suddenly she remembered the course Senior had adopted when Mrs. Getit insulted him in the bar of the "New Dug Out." Ah, she would do the same. Was not Senior a gentleman? A lady, therefore, would probably be doing the right thing to follow his footsteps; so she took not the slightest notice of them.

Clotts and Sparker accepted the snub and cleared, feeling very mean as they returned to their friends; but Bouncer, not liking to retreat with his colours lowered, said, "Come now, why won't you shake hands with me? What have I done?"

Still Cheeky never even deigned to look at him. Everybody's attention in the room was directed towards the officer and the pretty little girl with the childish face. All had observed the snub.

Bouncer, now dreadfully ill at ease, as he felt he was looking a terrible fool, in desperation sat down, and, leaning over, brought his face close to hers, and whispered conciliatingly, "My dear Miss Smirker, but what the deuce is the matter? You need not be afraid, we did not quite intend eating you; though you would be a delicious morsel, no doubt. What! won't you speak? Ah! I see you are trying to keep from laughing. Ah, there you are, I can see you," and he gave her a sly poke in the ribs. Cheeky rose up—she was still intent on trying to imitate Senior, only sarcasm was beyond her; she looked him full in the face; every voice was hushed; even the stewards stood still with trays in hand, watching the little scene. In clear tones her soft voice was heard right throughout the saloon, "Sir, you certainly are not a gentleman." Then she walked to the companion ladder, passing by the group of officers and civilians, who respectfully made way for her, and reached the deck, feeling proud that she had acted as she should have done.

A loud hum went up in the saloon, suggestive of "Well done" and "Serve him right." Bouncer walked off to his cabin to hide his confusion, putting on, as he went, an unsteady gait, as if he were so drunk as not to be accountable for his rudeness.

At length the last bell was rung, and the mails having now arrived, the quartermasters busied themselves in trying to get "all those for the shore" on to the shore. Then the final farewells, hand-shakings, and kisses took place. One tall, good-looking young woman, who was going home for the first time in her life, for the purpose of paying a visit to her husband's relations, caused quite a stir and commotion at the last moment by refusing to be parted from her husband, to whom she clung, sobbing hysterically, and exclaiming, "I won't leave him, I sha'n't! Oh, I won't leave him!" The husband was visibly affected by his wife's great affection and reluctance to be parted from him, and looked round with conscious pride at the on-lookers as he tried to speak soothing words of consolation to her. Cheeky was much moved at the sight. Ah! how well could she sympathise with the poor woman! But the captain was impatient, and could not afford the time for such a pathetic scene to be indulged in at the last moment. "Now then, passengers ashore, please," he shouted. "Here, stewardess, kindly see to this lady; and you, sir," addressing the husband, "you are keeping the whole ship waiting for you. Come, sir, you must get on shore at once." The sharp, matter-of-fact, and unsympathetic way in which he spoke seemed to have a quieting effect at once upon the disconsolate wife, who now ceased her lamentations, and allowed herself to be led below to her cabin by the stewardess.

Violet, who was still on board and had been watching the scene just described with all due sentimental appreciation, after once more embracing Cheeky, hurriedly took her leave, hastening down the gangway after the retreating husband. She had complimented her late pupil for having so successfully put the rude Captain Bouncer into his place, though, to tell the truth, she had felt annoyed at first at the other's prudishness. How often had she not seen young fellows under the influence of wine at dances frequently behaving somewhat strangely; it would never do to take notice of those small things—but when

she saw that all the sympathy was with the little girl, and heard the complimentary remarks as to her plucky and most proper behaviour, she told her late pupil that she was glad to see she had so much self-respect, and that she had behaved only as any lady should have done.

When Cheeky saw the gangway pulled away, and her late teacher standing on the shore with Mr. Sparker, a strange feeling of loneliness came over her.

Then the hawser was slackened off, the screw commenced to go round, and soon the "Cicero" was steaming out between the pier-heads, to one of which the people rushed to see the last of their friends. The outgoing passengers stood by the taffrail, and handkerchiefs were waved in adieux to one another. Cheeky waved hers in return to the ostentatious flourishing of Violet's. The latter was really sorry to part with her. She had grown as fond of the little girl—who had always been so ready to acknowledge her teacher's great superiority in everything—as it was in her nature to be of anyone of her own sex. Her eyes filled with tears, which, however, she took care not to wipe away until Sparker had observed them.

Cheeky remained gazing at the fast receding shore, until even the picturesque and brightly-coloured costumes of the Malay women, who had also come to see the "Cicero's" departure, were indistinguishable. Then she walked up and down the quarter-deck until at last the huge Table Mountain was hid in the darkening dusk of the evening. When she went down into her cabin, which was just abaft the saloon on the starboard side, the stewardess was passing at the time, and seeing the pretty face of the young girl looking clouded, spoke cheeringly, and, being curious to know where the young thing was bound all by herself, asked many questions. She learned little save seeing that Cheeky wanted to be left alone. She showed her how to turn off and on the electric light, and went her way.

Poor Cheeky felt miserable and lonely. Though she had hardly experienced aught but harsh words and cruel blows from her mother, she began to think of that parent with tender feelings of solicitude. Oh, how she yearned for one drop of kindly sympathy at that moment! The feeling of leaving everyone she knew behind greatly depressed her, and the thought that she might not find Senior, or, as

Violet suggested, that he might be dead, terrified her. At last, from her bosom she drew a letter.

“The Vicarage, Eightstone, Kent,

“December 28th, 188—.

“DEAR MADAM,—I received your note of the 1st a couple of days ago. I was indeed sorry to learn that a dear friend of my brother John was so unwell, and so anxious at not receiving an answer to his correspondence. I sincerely trust by the time this reaches you Mr. Smirker will at least be convalescent.

“I regret that I cannot send you comforting news regarding my brother's health. He has been seriously ill from a most malignant attack of typhoid fever. Only three weeks ago the doctors actually gave him up, but, thanks be to God! he rallied wonderfully, and has now passed the crisis, being—though as yet only slowly—recovering. The only thing now to be dreaded is a relapse, the doctor says; but as he is possessed of a most marvellous constitution, has the best medical advice, and the most careful and skilful nursing obtainable, there is every hope of such a catastrophe being averted.

“What a remarkable coincidence it is not only that two such friends should be so ill at the same time, but that the brain of each should be occupied by thoughts of the other! John, when delirious—which was for some time—kept continually and unceasingly calling out for ‘Cheeky,’ and ‘Cheeky Smirker,’ the first, I suppose, being his friend's nickname. He made use of such terms of affection that we made sure the friend was of the opposite sex, and something nearer and dearer than a comrade.

“As anything of a distressing nature would probably interfere to some extent with his recovery, I hope you and Mr. Smirker will kindly excuse my not acquainting my brother with his friend's illness. However, I trust that by the time he is considered well enough to receive the unwelcome tidings, better news will have arrived about Mr. Smirker.

“Kindly convey my best wishes to that gentleman.

“That God in His mercy will see fit to grant them both a speedy recovery is the earnest prayer of,—Yours, very sincerely,

HENRY W. SENIOR.”

This letter was the cause of Cheeky's departure for England.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE "Cicero" had been out eight days from Cape Town ; the passengers were quite at home. Though few in number, they soon divided into cliques.

There was the set that arrogated to itself the premier social position, and in time—mainly through the haughty superciliousness and rudeness of its chief, a Mrs. Topit—was recognised as such, and hated by those outside its pale. There was the "smoking-room crowd," always playing nap or whist ; the members of which, immediately after dinner, lounged about the entrance of the saloon, smoking, whilst they told, in turns, funny stories. Whenever one of the fair sex approached, would be heard the timely warning, "Hshsh ! look out !" indicating the nature of the tales. Though thus careful that nothing should be heard calculated to call to their cheeks a blush, most of these "good fellows" held the ladies up to ridicule, while to the servant-maids they evidently thought it right to pay some attention. The "smoking-room crowd" evidently enjoyed themselves the most ; boisterous melodies could be heard proceeding from their free-and-easy assemblies ; amusing breach-of-promise cases came off there. Then there were the few, a small branch of the "smoking-room crowd," who tried to pass away the monotonous passage merrily by getting intoxicated every night, and in consequence sleeping half the following day away in their cabins. There were the "ladies' men," always carefully dressed, who sat beside the women folk ; played draughts with them, read to them, carried their cushions and books, shifted their Madeira chairs from one side of the deck to the other when the hot rays of the shifting sun demanded it. These gallants were held in scorn by the "smoking-room crowd," and all kinds of nick-names were given them. The young ladies on board, full of life and animal spirits, continually visiting one another in each other's cabins and exchanging confidences, immensely enjoyed the sea-trip that gave them such opportunities for fun and flirtation. There were smaller sets formed by those who had tastes in common.

There were the indispensable men that one always meets with on board ship, who—for the importance it gives

them—take a most active part in getting up the concerts, dances, theatricals, the daily selling sweeps on the ship's run, and the athletic sports—all of which form the regular routine of amusement on board the mail-boats sailing between South Africa and England—frequently finishing up their useful career by getting up a most elaborate address to the captain, whose “sterling qualities and excellent seamanship all have so much admired,” etc., etc.

Mrs. Ashburnam, a lady somewhat past her youth, was received by no set; she sat always alone, none spoke to her, excepting a few of the “smoking-room crowd.” This woman possessed the visible signs of wealth in the shape of rich dresses and handsome jewellery, and frequently refreshed herself with champagne. She had come from Kimberley, but was apparently unknown there in respectable circles.

It was a lazy, idle life on board. Feeble attempts were made at having exercise in the shape of tennis, quoits, and cricket matches.

The great events of the day—those which all looked eagerly forward to—were the meals. As soon as the bell rang the passengers hastened down to the saloon, seated themselves at their respective tables, and with systematic care waded through the long pretentious menus. To most each meal was a welcome break to the wearying monotony.

Poor Cheeky had at first rather a miserable and trying time; she was still full of anxiety for her lover, and did not venture to address any of the women-folk, fearing contemptuous snubs. Mrs. Ashburnam, it was true, had made friendly overtures, but the girl, recognising at once what the woman was, consistently repelled her advances. The men, too, attracted by her pretty face, pestered her with their attentions at first; but she quickly let them see that she would have none of them, and, fortunately, the rebuff she had given Bouncer—well known by all—was the means of saving her from much annoyance. It was soon understood that this girl was not to be trifled with. Both Bouncer and Clotts had apologised for their rudeness, and raised their hats respectfully as they wished her “good-morning” each day.

But she was fortunate in forming a friendship with one of the nicest and best-bred women on board, Sister Eva,

a nurse from the New Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, going home on a visit to her uncle, Lord Goslyn. She and Cheeky became intimate through mutual interest in a poor young Englishman, far gone in consumption, taking a sea voyage in the vain hope of a cure. It made Cheeky sad to hear him making plans for the future, still full of life and ambition, when, as Sister Eva informed her, he could not possibly live a year.

The nurse took a fancy to the sweet childish face of the little girl, and soon got to like her greatly. Her patronage did Cheeky no little social good amongst the other lady passengers. A story got about very similar to the one that Violet first told, and which might have been the origin of this last one, that the girl was a lady by birth, who had been neglected by a stepmother of low origin, and that the deceased father's relations had sent for her to come home to England. Even Mrs. Topit now graciously condescended to speak to her, and asked her many questions with vulgar inquisitiveness. And that tall young fellow, John Mason, with the long ears and plebeian face, who, principally by the proud possession of a valet, had worked himself into the first set—for everyone knew that his father was a mason by trade, as well as by name, in Kimberley—even he was polite, and spoke to her patronisingly sometimes.

The young girls, too, who had at first seemed even more exclusive than their elders, began to talk to her.

In the buoyant hopefulness of youth Cheeky soon began to make less and less of her lover's illness, until at last she felt perfectly certain that when she arrived in England and telegraphed to the brother, Jack would hurry up to meet her, well and hearty as ever. She even found spirit enough to do a little study every day, Sister Eva gladly assisting her. She again looked forward to astonishing her lover with the great progress she had made. Her Indian clubs, ah! she must practise with them, too, or she would be forgetting the exercises which Jack had taken such pains in teaching her. So one day she brought her clubs on deck. She found to her delight she had forgotten nothing. Soon a crowd of passengers gathered round to watch her. She felt a little shy at first, and then pleased at the admiration expressed.

When the usual concert was given, the committee re-

quested her to allow them to put down on the programme "Indian club swinging, by Miss Smirker," and her contribution to the entertainment turned out to be the success of the evening. Cheeky blushed with pleasure when she needs must go back again, and go through her last two exercises—very complicated ones—the applause being so loud and continuous, and the rough sailors yelling out "Anchor! Anchor!" until she returned.

When the customary dance was given Cheeky was voted by all, not only the belle, but the best dancer. This accomplishment she had been fond of, and learned and practised in very third-rate hops in Cape Town.

Poor Miss Binning, from Natal, a lively and pretty young girl with golden hair, big blue eyes, and a colourless complexion, who had been a great favourite with the "King's Own Hussars" when that regiment had been stationed in Maritzburg, was very indignant with young Miller, from Cape Town, who had hitherto been so attentive, when he came to ask for the pleasure of a waltz for the first time that evening, and after he had danced twice with Cheeky. "No," she said, "I don't want to take you away from that creature; if you don't prefer ladies I prefer gentlemen."

Cheeky overheard the girl—who probably intended she should—and looked at Miss Binning with sad, reproachful eyes. The look went straight to a soft spot in the Natal girl's heart, and, obeying a generous impulse, she came close to Cheeky, and whispering, said, "Oh, please forgive me! it was hateful of me!" and held out her hand, which the other took and pressed gratefully. This kindly act of justice filled the little plebeian with gladness, and when she retired that night to rest she felt as if she had really enjoyed herself more than ever she had done since her lover left.

Her companions of her own sex, until she met Violet, had been of her own class, ignorant, coarse, and vulgar, only marked by different degrees of comparison; she had not even come in contact with the lower strata of middle life. This was the first opportunity she had of observing the ways and habits of the women who were considered so much above her. The opportunity was only too good. How quickly on board ship do masks fall off, and people appear in their true colours, no matter how

gaudy or disagreeable to the eye such colours may be! How soon an estimate, and generally a wonderfully accurate one, is taken of each one's measure! On a voyage, one will often get to know a person better than in a lifetime ashore. Cheeky had expected too much. Ladies were, after all, actuated by the same selfish motives as the women of the lower orders. They had a more polished way of hiding their faults; but the girl of the people discerned in all the snobbishness, malice, envy, and petty selfishness inherent in every class of human beings. But what shocked her most was their impropriety.

Mrs. Jones, the tall, good-looking young wife who had sorrowed so much at the moment of parting from her husband, Cheeky had imagined all kinds of pretty sentimental things about; she had longed to talk to this woman, to give her a willing ear to all the loving things she would be sure to wish to say in order to give relief to her overcharged heart. Had they not a sad joy in common, the separation from the one each loved most? But, to the young girl's surprise, Mrs. Jones was quickly reconciled, soon becoming lively, even frivolous, and openly carried on with Captain Bouncer in a way which, to say the least, was unbecoming.

Then Miss Bluter, of the first set, a young lady of thirty-six, and affecting a religious turn of mind, created quite a stir, and gave a most delicious and spicy morsel to the gossips of her select set, by telling them, with an assumed air of shocked modesty and confusion, how she had quite accidentally come across Mr. Blower, the chief officer, with his arm round the waist of Mrs. Thomaset, a young woman who had only been married a couple of days before the "Cicero" left Cape Town, and who was now with her husband bound for Europe on their honeymoon; the bridegroom having been confined to his cabin through sea-sickness ever since he set foot on board.

And one evening, when Cheeky was suffering from a headache and did not go down to dinner, she saw the Rev. Aubrey Brownley—a promising young clergyman, curate to the Bishop of Bluefontein—trying to kiss Mrs. Caynor's nursemaid, a pretty little off-coloured girl, little dreaming that he was being observed. And so disgusted was Cheeky that she did not again attend the Sunday morning service, though previously she had admired

and been struck by the sadly impressive and nicely intoned voice with which the young clergyman read the lessons.

And the young girls, too, who appeared so modest before the men, she had heard when by themselves speak almost as slangily as any barmaids. What puzzled her not a little was how tales of backsliding were welcomed by so many who affected to be most proper. Even Sister Eva, who was so kind, seemed not to dislike a choice bit of scandal. Cheeky even thought she could detect in some of the virtuous a feeling akin to envy of the guilty enjoyment of the sinful.

But the two passengers who interested her most, and helped to shed a sweet ray of light through the darkness of her disappointment, were Mr. and Mrs. Gladwin, a middle-aged couple from Natal. They belonged to no set. Their whole happiness seemed to be in each other's society, though they found time for a pleasant smile and kindly word for everyone. Even the solitary Mrs. Ashburnam was greeted each day by Mrs. Gladwin with a compassionate bow and a soft-spoken "Good-morning." The attachment of the husband and wife was like a sunbeam of good influence on the little girl's own love.

Besides Sister Eva Cheeky had another friend, Mr. Manning, the second officer, a quiet gentlemanly fellow, formerly in the Navy. He was the son of a clergyman and had been brought up in the country. Cheeky and he, ever since the dance, when he had first spoken to her, had gradually been becoming friendly. His manner and the ring of his voice reminded her of Jack Senior; he was also very good-looking. Being a young, romantic sailor, he soon fell in love with the pretty childish-looking girl, and felt greatly flattered by her preference, as she had never walked up and down the deck with any of the rest as she now did with him.

Cheeky came to look forward with pleasure to the evening promenade after dinner with Mr. Manning, who was inclined to hold a high conception of people and things in this life. He was so different from the general run of men she had as yet met, and his connection with the roving sea life had a romantic smack about it that was also pleasing.

One day Sister Eva teased her about him,

"Ah, the sea," she said, "was evidently Cupid's richest field for sport."

"No, sister," returned Cheeky, "Mr. Manning is really a gentleman; I mean, not only by birth, but by behaviour. There seem to be so very few whom a young girl like me can talk to without fear of their trying on a lot of nonsense. I certainly do like him, but you know I—I—I—"

"Love another, I suppose; eh?"

"Yes," Cheeky answered simply.

"Ah, but, my dear child, absence often makes the heart grow fonder of somebody else."

"There is no fear, sister; I love him too much ever to forget him. I am not like Mrs. Jones."

"Now, don't be too sure, my dear; it seems to be a law of nature that young people must be drawn to each other if thrown together. I am not one to believe in Platonic friendships between young people; I have seen too much. Now, for instance, very likely Mrs. Jones loves her husband—well, as much as she is capable of loving—and if he were here she would probably prefer him to that coarse-looking soldier fellow. But it is very sad that there are so few that are to be trusted if the temptation be only strong enough. I really don't think there is one in fifty."

That evening Manning came and, as usual, asked Cheeky if she felt inclined for "a turn on deck." She hesitated, remembering what Sister Eva had said; but why should she not? She felt so perfectly confident as to the faithful nature of her love that it was like an insult to it to dread in the very least any weaning of her affection from her lover. Besides, she really liked the young sailor, and his conversation was pleasant and interesting. She did not answer, but simply took her place by his side and walked up and down the quarter-deck with him.

Manning told her about some little episode that happened when he was a youngster stationed at Hong Kong—some amusing scrape he and his brother middies had got into; but when he came to the funniest part of the story Cheeky showed no sign of being amused, and he accused her chaffingly—but feeling some chagrin—that she had not been listening.

"No, I have not," answered the girl. "I really beg your pardon, I have been thinking, oh! about such a lot of things. I want to ask you something."

They stopped close by the wheel-grating and looked over the ship's side. There was about a six-knot breeze blowing, and, being abeam, it kept the vessel, by aid of her fore and aft sails, steady.

The sky was beautifully clear, and the moon, nearly full, having just risen, was large, round, and yellow, and sent a soft pure light dancing over the waste of waters in the direction of the vessel, which sped along, leaving behind her a foaming, silver wake.

After a pause, Manning said, "Well, go on, full speed ahead, I am waiting."

"I was thinking, you know; puzzling my head, you know——" and then Cheeky stopped.

"Yes, what about?"

"Now, tell me, Mr. Manning, have you ever met with any very, very good people; I mean heroes and heroines? You must see a great many different people, as you make so many voyages backwards and forwards, and you have so much chance on board ship to find out really what they are."

"Well, no, I can't say I have; though there are, I suppose, plenty in the world; still, it has not been my luck to meet, as yet, a real hero or heroine, though I might have done so and not known it. One can never tell until the occasion arises when there is an opportunity of showing what stuff people are made of: a vessel sinking, for instance, when perhaps there are not enough boats for all: then there is a chance for the hero to gallantly give up his place in the boat for someone else, knowing that he will meet certain death by doing so."

"I feel sure you would do that, Mr. Manning; if some poor woman wanted your place, you would step out at once; in fact, I don't believe you would think of yourself at all until all the women and children, at any rate, were safe in the boats."

"Oh, I don't know that," Manning replied, as a blush of pleasure spread over his face at the girl's good opinion of him, an opinion which he could see was genuine. "One never knows what one might do if such a thing really did happen. It is all very fine to talk about the great and grand things we would do when we are feeling comfortable and safe."

"Now I want to ask you, Mr. Manning, do people get

really worse when they get on the sea than they were on land?"

"In which way do you mean?"

Cheeky with rather a confused air replied, "Well, you know, I have never mixed with ladies before, excepting the one who used to teach me in Cape Town, and I used to think that ladies would be so nice, being so well brought up, never hearing bad language, and no one running after them trying to—to—to, you know, put bad ideas into their heads, like they do to common girls; and then with their good education and all, and having good mothers who tell them all about religion when they are quite little children. But I have been so disappointed, I find that there is so little difference after all; only the ladies dress better, speak more nicely, can play and sing, and all that sort of thing, and they are more polite to one another; but many of them don't mean half they say, for behind each other's backs they say dreadful things; and some are—not quite proper. Does their going on board ship make them all so bad? The stewardess says she thinks it's the strong sea air that does it. What do you think?"

Cheeky's question was asked in all innocence, a fact which the second officer recognised, and the delicacy of the subject which she invited him to discuss drew him more than ever to the little girl, as it gave to the conversation a sweet confidential character, such as only those who are on terms of great intimacy can indulge in.

After turning the matter over in his mind, he replied, "Well—now—to me, life on board ship often shows people at their worst. No doubt people do anything but improve when they take a sea trip; the idle life, the entire want of any occupation, you know, the over-feeding all seem to go in for, just to help to pass the time away, and I suppose the want of healthy exercise for both mind and body, the enervating and irritating effects of the tropical heat they are so suddenly rushed into, the total want of distraction, all help to make people selfish and nasty—one might say even wicked sometimes. Another thing, people are thrown so much together, and become so intimate, that they don't even take the trouble to hide their faults. Often people whom you think are very nice ashore you find out at sea to be the reverse, not that they

become so very much worse, but that you get to know them so much better. But as for ladies, we have not many on board; the majority of the women are tradespeople's wives," added Manning, who was conservative and had the prejudices of his class.

"What! are they not all ladies? I thought they were—excepting Mrs. Ashburnam, of course."

"Oh, no! there are many more besides her who are not ladies. Now that friend of yours, Sister Eva, she *is* a lady."

"Is she? She is certainly good—but—. And the Gladwins?"

"Oh, yes," returned Manning, after a pause, expressing doubt, "they are all right, I suppose. Colonial, you know."

"I think," said Cheeky, "they are so nice—the nicest people on board—and there are others, too, good enough; but—well, I don't know, but I am disappointed altogether. Sister Eva tells me, too, she does not think there is one in fifty proof against very strong temptation. Did she not mean ladies? Was she speaking of the tradesmen's wives, as you call them? Don't ladies, then, like talking scandal, and do they never do wrong?"

"Ah! now," returned Manning laughingly, "there you have me. Our best-bred women, I'm afraid, get the worst name for that sort of thing; in fact, our middle classes, people of Mrs. Jones' stamp, for instance, are supposed to be the most virtuous."

"Well, where is the difference? Poor Mr. Jones," Cheeky went on, "how proud he seemed because his wife howled so when the ship was going to sail. And, gentlemen too—is there the same difference in them? Now, Mr. Skiller, he keeps a shop in Cape Town, but he is always so polite and respectful to me, and I feel sure he is honest and kind-hearted, and seems to be well-educated enough, too. Now, Captain Bouncer, he was very rude to me the day we left, and though I am not a lady, still I am only a young girl, and all alone in the world, and have no father or brother to take my part, so it was very cowardly of him to try and make free with me. Now, he is in the Army, and Violet—the lady who used to teach me in Cape Town—used to say that officers of the English Army were always considered to be gentlemen of the first rank. Would you,

then, say that Captain Bouncer is a gentleman because he is in the Army, though he behaves so badly, and that Mr. Skiller was not one, since he keeps a shop, even though he is polite and honest and good?"

"Oh! I believe a navy can be a gentleman," returned the other, with an air of generosity in allowing this. "But, you know," he went on, "to tell you the truth, though the Queen's commission is supposed to stamp a man as a gentleman, more than half of the Army fellows are outsiders; sons of shopkeepers, many of them, men who really don't care a rap for their profession, but simply go into the service for swagger and social position. Now, in the Navy, there you meet a different set of fellows altogether; most of the men in that service are gentlemen, not only by birth, but by manners and principles. But Bouncer is well enough bred, as far as that goes; he is a son of Sir Richard Henry Bouncer, Ambassador to Russia."

"Do you know," said Cheeky, "in Cape Town I used to read in novels about so many perfect men and women, who were nearly always gentlemen and ladies, ever so many of them descended from noblemen, and they used to behave so nobly, too. They always spoke so nicely, and whenever anybody did a wrong action there was always someone ready to denounce and punish the wrongdoer. The wicked people came to a bad end, as they deserved. But I am afraid it is not so."

"Ah, well," said the sailor, "it would not do to reproduce life as it really is. - Nice thing it would be for young girls to read of the actions and conversations of men as they really take place, or even those of women either, for they would not, I suppose, look very well in print. Why no book that attempted such a thing would be allowed to be published, and rightly so, too. No, we all know pretty well how bad society really is; what we want in books are ideals, something to try and copy from."

"Well," Cheeky returned, "I suppose you know best, you have seen so much of the world, and are so much older than I; but, you know, lately I have been thinking it might do a lot of good to put people in stories just as they appear in real life, and then, you see, we might get so ashamed of ourselves that we would try to be better. Now, if you looked in a looking-glass and saw some black on your face, you would immediately wipe it off; or if

your tie was crooked, you would put it straight. There would be very little good in having a glass that made us appear a good deal better than we really were. Why, we might be thinking we were looking quite nice, when all the time there was a black spot on our nose; and have people laughing at us, all through the fault of the deceiving looking-glass. I am sure if Mrs. Jones read in a book about a woman who had behaved as she has, she would be very much ashamed of herself."

"Well, but you see, in books, at least those of a good moral tendency, you have your bad characters as well as your good, and the vices of the former are so drawn and painted that it has a tendency to make you shun them; and then the good characters are made attractive in such a way as to make you feel inclined to emulate their virtues. I know the effect good books have on myself; after reading one I can feel the good it has done me, and the strengthened desire to be a better man. It is all education, you know, what one reads. Every book must leave its impression upon you for good or bad. If you want to go in for real life read the *Police News*, and then see what a nasty taste that would leave behind. It is a well-known fact that reading of suicides often makes people commit them; it draws their minds into that sort of channel. Well, I suppose reading about all kinds of wickedness would have the same effect, and *vice versâ*. I believe many a great action that has been done, if it only could be traced, is due to the influence created by the lofty ideal of some novel."

Poor Cheeky, though many thoughts passed through her brain, could not find words to express them.

"Well, of course you know best," she said, "and if novels of that kind do you good, it is nothing but right for you to choose them. The other day I commenced to read one; I could not go on with it, and I could see that the characters were so different from those we really meet. No, I should like to read about people as they are—not, of course, to pick out all the worst characters, like in the *Police News*—just as they come; or, even, to choose some of the best, and then I would feel satisfied; and when I read of some woman ever so much better than I am, who still was true to life, then I would think, 'Ah, now there is a chance for me to be like this woman, because

such a one is really living. There is a lady I know of—I have not seen her yet, she is in England—well, she is a splendid woman and a lady, a proper one, you know. I am going to try my best to grow up like her.”

“Perhaps you will be disappointed in her, too; it is very seldom one’s expectations in this world are realised.”

“Oh, no, I feel certain I shall not; you see, I know her brother, and he is—well he is—I really think, a hero, and the only one I have ever come across, excepting you. I feel certain that you would show yourself to be one if only you had the chance,” the girl added quickly, not wishing to hurt his feelings by leaving him out, and she really believed what she said. “And,” she went on, “he says that his sister is a long way better than he is, but he thinks, like real heroes, so little of himself.”

A pang of jealousy shot through Manning’s heart at this praise of another, but he remained silent.

“Now tell me,” the girl continued, “would you trust your wife—I mean if you had one—all alone on a steamer?”

“I should take care that the woman I married was one I could trust anywhere or under any circumstances,” returned the sailor somewhat sententiously.

“Ah, but then you might be mistaken. You know that song, that duet that Gertrude Wynn and the tenor singer—I forget his name—sang in *Manteaux Noir* at the Cape Town Theatre, ‘Love is blind.’”

“Well, if a certain girl I know were my wife,” said Manning significantly, “I should be only too glad to chance being blind. I should not have the slightest shadow of doubt about her faithfulness.”

At this moment, in the fore-part of the vessel, two of the sailors, one with a concertina, the other with a squeaking fiddle, struck up “Home, Sweet Home.” The noise of the screw, the vessel rushing through the water, the vast openness of the heavens, softened the music.

Cheeky sat down on the wheel-grating, listening; the young sailor seated himself beside her. She had not heard his last remark. The music touched a key of sentiment within her bosom. She dreamily gazed on the broad expanse of the ocean, glittering in the reflected light from the moon fast rising in the heavens.

How she longed for a sweet home, and kind, loving parents and sisters and brothers! Here she was all alone in the world, justly called cruel. For all she knew, Jack, the only one she had ever really cared for, might be dead. But the melody of the sailors now brought back the memories of his unceasingly calling out for "Cheeky" in his delirium, and she felt a sweet sadness. She must always have someone to love—Jack could not be dead—Jesus could not be so cruel. The music still went on, chilling her now with a feeling of loneliness. Tears filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Manning observed her with varying feelings. What had so suddenly caused this weeping? Was it grief or happiness? Was it thoughts of her friend, perhaps lover, whom she thought a hero? Was it remembrance of a sweet home which the tune the "Jacks" were playing brought to her mind? Or could it be his own words—words with which he had meant to show his love for her—that had caused poignant emotions? She dropped her handkerchief. Manning and she stooped down at the same moment to pick it up; their cheeks touched, and the young sailor (almost mechanically) kissed her. She did not resent it; a joy filled his heart; she loved him, the tears were for him. He clasped her to his arms and kissed her lips passionately.

When Cheeky felt his first kiss she experienced a shade of pleasure, akin to that of a little child soothed by its mother in some time of trouble—she was so lonely, and yearned so for sympathy; but when she realised that his arms were around her, and felt his warm kisses on her lips, a sudden fear came over her. This man was trying to rob Jack of her love. She gave a little cry, and roughly disengaging herself from his embrace, ran to her cabin, and, locking the door, looked at herself shamefacedly in the mirror, her cheeks suffused with blushes. The consciousness of having felt pleasure at Manning's first caress dismayed her. Surely she could have had no other feeling but that of friendship for him? She tried hard to analyse what her real feelings had been as she remembered now what Sister Eva had said. After a little time spent in endeavouring to solve the conflicting thoughts that assailed her mind, and again looking in the mirror, trying, as it were, to read from her own countenance whether she was guilty or not, she produced from her box a bundle of

letters wrapped in cloth and tied round with a piece of tape. She read one letter after the other, dwelling on some of the passages, and repeating them aloud over and over again. But even though she was greatly troubled by the searching and severe cross-examination she was undergoing by a most sensitive conscience, she felt painfully aware of disappointment. Was Mr. Manning after all no better than the rest with all his grand ideas? Was this the end of their friendship? Oh! how very few good people there were in the world! But the doubt regarding the young sailor did not long remain. A new light dawned upon her, a light that even brought a subtle tinge of pleasure. This man really cared for her. What could she do? She could never have any more walks with him. She must tell him of her love for Jack. Ah! there was no doubt about that love—none! After putting the letters away, she produced a photograph; it was that of her lover, and, bursting into a fresh fit of weeping, she kissed it, and addressing it, exclaimed, "Jack, dearest Jack! I do love you! I do love you, and you alone! I meant nothing, although I felt a little pleased when he kissed me. I was thinking of you, and feeling sad and lonely; but all my love is for you only. You believe me, don't you, Jack?" The girl imagined that she could see a kind and trusting look come into the eyes of her lover's photograph, and began to feel more at ease. Then she said, "Yes, dearest, you know I do love you, eh? Oh! I will be true to you, as true as death, I will!"

And then the poor lonely little soul lifted up her chin, and gravely passed her hand across her throat.

CHAPTER XXII.

WITH undiminished energy May Leslie pursued her illicit trade in diamonds. Rapidly, in spite of Searight's extravagances and gambling follies, she was amassing a fortune. In order to avoid, to some extent, the risk of heavy losses through the seizure of diamonds when running them across the border, she hit upon a new idea; she secured the

services of a big brawny Scotchman, Sandy Dathrie, the son of a Presbyterian minister, a man who, though he did not hesitate to connect himself with the nefarious traffic, could be looked upon as almost trustworthy. I.D.B. was to him no more than a profitable evading of exorbitant Customs dues; he never deemed it for a moment dishonest. May Leslie engaged this worthy Scot to take up his quarters in Christiana, a town in the Transvaal, there to buy and receive for her, and to register and send the diamonds home to England by Natal to her London agents: Samuel Bros., Hatton Garden.

She stipulated, on buying a parcel of diamonds from a member of the I.D.B. fraternity, that the money was only to be paid on delivery of the same to her agent at Christiana. When a price was agreed upon, she gave an order on Sandy Dathrie to pay a sum upon delivery for a certain fully described parcel. Thus those who sold to her under these conditions incurred all risks.

Foxnisky, the celebrated detective, she had played so skilfully, and his bondage was so complete, that this hitherto taciturn individual could keep nothing from her; to her his mind was quite open, even though he knew how she profited thereby. Through the information she got out of him, her criminal trade kept increasing; claim-managers, overseers, engine-drivers, engineers, miners, contractors, and even managers and directors of companies were all now included in her connection.

So long as the man was under the impression that his love for the fair criminal was returned, his conscience suffered but little from the fact that he was aiding and abetting the very crime he had been employed to help to suppress, and that through his instrumentality many miserable wretches, not nearly so harmful as he himself had become to the diamond industry, were being doomed from day to day to long terms of penal servitude; for he still prized his reputation as the smartest detective on the staff.

But the day came when his eyes were opened.

May Leslie, seeing how completely the man was in her thrall, began to get less and less careful to disguise her real feelings. Foxnisky was piqued and greatly pained at the change. He had always fully believed in himself and his own astuteness, but now a horrible suspicion invaded and haunted his mind until it became a

certainty; this woman had never cared for him, but for her own ends had simply made a tool of him, and with all his crafty skill and knowledge of the seamy side of human nature he had been completely out-generalled, and was now looked upon by her with contempt. Vanity was his weakest point, and now from the wounds inflicted in it he underwent tortures. He lost self-respect. It was noticed by his detective brethren that he became less overbearing, and had lost much of his smartness, and, in consequence, he became more popular with them.

The more indifferent May Leslie seemed, the deeper his infatuation became. At last she made not the slightest attempt to hide her disgust for him and his slavish fondness. She had first attracted him by leading him to believe that he had made an impression on her. With great adroitness she had fanned this feeling of interest by many coquettish ways and thoughtful attentions into an ardent attachment; an attachment which the discovery of the way she had fooled and really despised him only served to inflame into a devouring passion to possess her.

Searight was living a life entirely in accordance with his tastes—a life of idleness, ease, and comfort, with a beautiful woman, his most humble slave, to wait upon him. This Irishman's treatment of May Leslie had been getting worse and worse. The fonder and more submissive she became, the more irritable and violent grew he. Had she not cared for him, had she only become his mistress for the sake of convenience, as she had done in the case of Ikey Mosetenstine, she could have had him at her feet. But her love for Searight was a passion deep and strong, and the man's nature had a large share of that animal brutality which takes delight in ill-usage when it can be done with impunity. May Leslie, with all her spirit, was powerless to resist her lover's ill-treatment. True, stung by his selfishness and most unreasonable reproaches, she often lost her temper. But the victory always was his—she dreaded losing what little regard he might still have for her.

The aim of her existence now became to secure his love. For this she did every little thing she could think of to administer to his pleasure and comfort. She despised Foxnisky's infatuation, not perceiving its resemblance to her own. She failed to see that the more she

gave the more difficult to satisfy became the demands of the parasite for whom she was steeping herself in crime.

From angry words and curses Searight came to threats of violence. One night he came in, his face flushed with drink, and his gait unsteady. He had been gambling the whole day. May Leslie sat making up her books—she was very methodical. He put his arm round her neck and kissed her. "Oh! yes, Charlie, that will do," she said, as she pretended to disengage his arm. "What is it you want now? You can't really have any more money to-night, so don't think it, sir," she added, assuming a bantering air.

"Look here, May," he returned, "only twenty quid, and I'll give you my word of honour if I lose that I won't ask for more."

"No, Charlie, I really cannot; we must draw the line somewhere. I have given you to-day already one hundred and fifty pounds. Surely that is enough to lose for one day. If you keep on at this rate you'll soon break us. For goodness' sake do have a little sense! Wait until to-morrow, your luck is out to-night."

But Searight did not wish to wait, and as the other kept refusing, he lost his temper, and, as usual, raged and swore at her.

"Look here! are you going to give me that money?"

"No!"

"If you don't you'll be sorry for it. Will you give it me?"

"No!"

"You won't?"

"No!" May Leslie again replied, as she made believe that she was occupied with her accounts, adding up money columns audibly, but feeling very uncomfortable.

"Then take that, you ——!" and he struck her, as she sat, a cruel blow with the fist, cutting the cheek.

May Leslie started up, but never uttered a word, never a cry. She shrank back a few steps, and gazed at him, as now, greatly frightened at what he had done, to stimulate his fast oozing courage he tried to work himself into a passion. He raved, stamped his feet, gnashed his teeth, and went on like a madman, using threats of further violence. He even accused her of infidelity with

Foxnisky. Still she did not speak. She stood fearful for her life.

Her silence filled him with a sickening apprehension lest he had at last gone too far—for what could he do without her? He got quieter and quieter, and ended by apologising. "I do wish, May," he said, "you would not try to annoy me the way you do; you know my beastly temper. I did not mean to hit you, on my honour as a gentleman, I did not really, and I am beastly sorry—there now!"

When the woman saw that his rage was spent, she began in her turn to upbraid. She sobbed hysterically as she screamed out in voluble language her accusations—that he was a beast, a dirty low hound, a brute who loafed upon a poor woman and then ill-treated her. It was her house, and he, the miserable, cowardly cur, had better leave it at once, or she would send Charley for the police and have him arrested. She reminded him of what she had done for him. If ever he dare to lift a hand to her again she would, she threatened, shoot him like a dog. Searight, as he listened, felt faint with a craven fear, but was a little more at ease in his mind. After such a storm she would forgive him, he instinctively knew; it was her silence that had scared him.

He, however, must be more careful in future. "By Jove! I never knew," he said to himself, "that she had such a temper."

Being afraid of her noisy declamations attracting the attention of the neighbours, and that he would then be shown up, he thought he would leave her for awhile, and give her temper time to cool.

"Well, May," he broke in, "I told you I did not mean it, and that I was beastly sorry. If you think me such a brute as you make out, the best thing is for me to clear, so here is off!" He made a movement towards the door, but she, rushing forward, intercepted him, and, flinging her arms around him, exclaimed, "Oh, Charlie!" Her deep sobs choked her utterance. She could say no more.

He, feeling reassured, kissed and tried to soothe her. May Leslie clung to him, feeling that she had never loved him so much as at that moment.

Searight did not go out again that night, and for a few

days treated her with kindness. May Leslie felt brimming over with delight at the change in her lover.

But it was not long before, no doubt encouraged by this fresh proof of her great affection for him, he struck her again, and then again, and again. He even kicked her. Scenes were constant, and always the same. Searight's brutal violence, then assumption of rage; May's abject, silent fear; after these came the former's penitence and apologies, and the other's turn of violent upbraiding. His threats to leave her would be followed by her tenderly clinging to him and shedding copious tears, and asking for forgiveness, as she experienced a sweet, thrilling sensation of how much she loved him, mixed with the terrible dread that she might lose him. For a few days he would be somewhat subdued and kinder, while she again would be all joy, entertaining each time the delusive hope that the present better treatment would be permanent. She even got to look forward to his brutal attacks for the sake of the tenderness and the gentle treatment that followed. But swear at and ill-use her as he might, he could never bully her into giving him money when she had decided that he had had sufficient. Why, for whom was she scheming, thieving, and saving!

Foxnisky and Searight seldom met. The detective viewed his brutality with mixed feelings. It pained him much that the slender, handsome woman, whose image was never out of his mind, should be so horribly ill-used. Yet he would not have wished it otherwise. The life she led gave him the consoling hope that he must in time wean her love from the scoundrel. The day must come when her spirit would revolt. He had continually the picture in his mind of her coming to him for advice and assistance to get rid of this brutal husband. He had a plan already cut and dried for the moment. It gave him no little pleasure, the constant going over and over in his mind the tragic scene his imagination conjured up, when Searight's dynasty would end.

As Searight treated May Leslie, so she in turn treated the detective. It seemed a relief to her pent-up feelings of misery, when the one she cared for pained her most, to be as cruel to the man who loved her. With a woman's keen perception she well knew how to stab the infatuated

Foxnisky to the heart; but he, unlike her, made not the slightest show of resistance. Feeling that this woman could read him through and through, and that any retort on his part would probably provoke from her still further taunts, he remained silent though his heart dripped blood. However, like the proverbial moth, he missed no opportunity of flying to the light that was consuming him. Unhappy when with her, he was even more miserable when he was away.

Their intimacy was unknown to May Leslie's I.D.B. friends. She took every precaution that it should remain so. Not that they would suspect her of treachery; they knew her own interest prevented that. But if the cat were seen prowling about, the birds would be shy. Foxnisky was given to understand, under the pain of losing her friendship for ever, that she was at home to him only in the afternoon between three and six. She informed her illicit friends that during these hours she was never to be seen, no matter what tempting parcel might be brought. She firmly adhered to this rule, so they soon learned that it was useless to attempt to get her to break it.

One afternoon May Leslie was in the sitting-room, gaily singing and accompanying herself on the piano—she was in the best of spirits. A hurried knock came at the door. She rose, and, expecting to see Foxnisky, opened it.

"Gracious me!" she exclaimed, "what on earth do you want here? Don't you know that I never see anybody at this time? Off you go at once. How did you get in? No, I will not see you. Go away at once."

"I only want to see you for a couple of minutes on urgent business," replied a voice, and, pushing past her, there entered a tall, slender, handsome young man, with pale face and big bright black eyes. He hurriedly closed the door, turned the key in the lock, and then seated himself at the table.

He wore a well-fitting black cloth suit and a white tie, which gave him a dressy look. In the tie was a pin with a small diamond, beautifully clear and white; on his little finger was a ring with just such another stone.

This young fellow was a well-known I.D.B., celebrated for his cuteness and audacity. Though the detectives had, time after time, tried to trap him, they had never suc-

ceeded. Often when meeting these worthy officers at bars he would chaff them about their repeated failures, much to their discomfiture, and much to the edification of his I.D.B. brethren admirers. The detective department had its eagle eye upon him; its members individually longed to secure this hero for the sake of the great kudos his capture would bring. His name was Morris, and his father was a man of wealth in London. The son had gone to the bad through spendthrift habits and gambling.

"What is the matter now?" May Leslie asked impatiently, as she seated herself at the table opposite to him. She observed that he had a wearied and nervous look in his eyes. His lips trembled as he spoke.

"Do you know," replied he, "I have not been in bed since the night before last? I have been shpoeling hazards ever since five o'clock yesterday afternoon until five minutes ago, when I had my first wash. I have lost, by heaven, in that time £2,000, all the money I have; even my watch and chain, that cost me £60, have gone too; I let them go for £20. I would have planked my ring and pin, but I could get no one to offer anything decent for them."

"Well, I am sorry to hear it, Morris. I can't see what you flymen see in gambling; it is a game only fit for fools and sharpers. But what do you want me to do? Come, now, look sharp; you must never come at this time again."

Just at this moment Foxnisky entered the house from the back unobserved. He always walked softly, and as he approached the sitting-room he heard the voices of May Leslie and Morris. He hesitated whether he should not turn back. Next to the sitting-room was a small room Mosetenstine used to call a "smoking-room" (though that individual smoked all over the house), communicating with both the hall and the sitting-room. Foxnisky, with detective instinct, thought of this, and, with no defined plan of action, he noiselessly opened the door, closed it after him, and took up his position at the other door, applying his eye to the key-hole.

"Well," said Morris in answer to May Leslie's last inquiry, "I want you to let me have say thirty pounds at once. By Jove! I must have one more go in, and see if I can't get some of my oof back again. I have brought with me a stone, a bit off-coloured, but worth sixty at the least; here it is." He produced a diamond wrapped in a

piece of tissue paper, rolling it across the table towards her. "Now," he said, "like a good soul, let me have the pieces."

"But, my dear boy," returned the woman, "you know my new rule, don't you? I buy all my stuff through Sandy at Christiana."

"Yes, I know that, but surely you can help a poor devil when he is broke, and wants a show of getting some of his money back?"

A sudden hope gleamed through the detective's mind that May Leslie would not buy the diamond; if she did not, then he might get out of the house unperceived, follow Morris up, pounce upon and search him, and find the stone on him—a clear case of illegal possession. Foxnisky had been unsuccessful of late—here would be a grand opportunity of adding a big feather to his cap. He felt excited.

May Leslie, thoughtfully feeling the weight of the diamond in her hand, replied, "Well, Morris, I'll let you have the money; this time I'll break my rule."

The detective experienced a sharp pang of disappointment.

"But, by Jove!" she suddenly exclaimed, as the I.D.B. was about to express his thanks, "I forgot; I don't believe I have as much money in the house. But what on earth is the matter with you? Why you have turned as white as a sheet!"

Morris had sunk back in his chair, his face perfectly livid. He closed his eyes and sighed. May Leslie, rushing to the sideboard, poured some brandy into a glass, handed it to him, and he, feebly extending his hand for it, drank it off. He quickly revived. He shook his head, pressed both hands one on top of the other to his left side, smiled faintly, and said, "Heart! that is the third time since this morning. I have always been troubled with a weak heart, you see, and I have been having a very lively time of it lately; but I feel right now, that brandy fetched me round quick."

"You look better now. My! you gave me a fright. I thought you were going to faint; you looked like a ghost."

"Now fetch me the money, like a trump; the stone is worth a good sixty, and I only want half that. Do you know, this is the first time since the new Act that I have

carried a stone on me through the streets during the day-time. I got the needle so that I would have run any risk to raise the wind. It would be just my mozel now if I got nailed; but hurry up with the pieces, I want to get back before they knock off playing."

"Yes, but did you not hear what I said just now? I don't think I have any cash in the house; here, you put the stone in your pocket until I go for the cash-box."

She went out. Morris picked up the stone and put it in his pocket.

Foxnisky hoped that she would not find the money. Never before had this cool hand felt so nervously excited. His knees trembled; he straightened himself up to stop them. Then the fear came over him that perhaps she might come into the room and see him. Morris glanced at some photographs on the table and then threw them down impatiently. He was feverishly anxious to get back to the game of hazards.

May Leslie came back with a cash-box. The door locked, she took a small tray out of the box. "I am almost sure," she said, "I have only one or two pounds," and she emptied the contents on the table.

Foxnisky strained his eyes to see what money there was. His heart beat rapidly as he heard her say—"There now! I thought so, only £4 10s. That is no good, is it?"

Morris let out an oath, and in an ill-tempered tone said, "I shall have to try someone else then. I hate running those foolish risks, there is nothing in it; 'tis not my form to be carrying a stone about with me. Would they not laugh if they nabbed me after all my blooming bounce? There is old Tickson, I'll look him up. Wish I knew where to find him."

Morris rose, and in mistake for the door he had come in by, made for the one behind which the detective was with his eyes still to the key-hole. He opened it. Foxnisky stood upright. Their eyes met. Morris, throwing up his arms, gave a violent start. "Oh, my God!" he cried, and fell into the other's arms insensible.

The detective laid him on the ground. "Quick, bring some water; he has fainted."

May Leslie soon fetched a jug of water. Foxnisky bathed the man's face and head, but there were no signs





The detective had missed the coveted prey, being forestalled by that grim officer who never fails. —Page 221.

of returning consciousness. He placed his ear to the heart, and listened with bated breath.

May Leslie, her eyes fixed on the prostrate form, stood near; bent forward, hands resting on knees, waiting for Foxnisky to speak.

At length he raised his head, pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped his moustache mechanically and looked at her.

"What?" gasped May Leslie.

"Dead!"

"My God! How?" said the woman.

It was so. The detective had missed the coveted prey, being forestalled by that grim officer who never fails.

"Heart-disease, I suppose," muttered Foxnisky, still kneeling by the body. He and May Leslie stared blankly into each other's face, but, used to emergencies, his mind quickly shaped out a line of action. After all he would manage to get as much kudos as if he had actually captured Morris. He could report the sensational incident to his chief, duly coloured. May Leslie should appear as his assistant, it would be a good thing for her to get that credit; besides it was the best way out of it. "Now, I will tell you," he hurriedly whispered as he rose, "what is to be done. In the first place I must clear away at once before anyone has the chance of seeing me here. As soon as I am gone send for a doctor. Don't say a word about my being here, of course, and when——" But he was interrupted by the sound of a step at the door. He and May Leslie anxiously looked in that direction.

A short, ill-shaped man, with a long beaklike nose and mutton-chop whiskers, wearing a loud check suit of recent English cut, stood in the doorway. As he gazed at the sight before him his jaw dropped and a dazed look came into his face. May Leslie gave a start. "Good heaven! Ikey Mosetenstine!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the dining-room of the quaint, old-fashioned vicarage at Eightstone, Kent, sat at lunch the Rev. Mr. Henry Senior, Mrs. Senior, and their three children, also John Senior. A boy, lately added to the establishment, and who did stable duty as well, was handing round the dishes in a most dignified manner.

John Senior was convalescent, to judge by the havoc he was making on a plate of cold roast fowl and ham. Though the attack of typhoid fever had been sharp, he was now making rapid strides towards complete recovery. Indeed, beyond a little thinness and paleness there was but little change in the young athlete who had effectually put the pugilist Dooley *hors de combat* in the Diamond Market of Kimberley.

The Rev. Henry Senior was a man about forty, thin, weak, and short of stature. His soft blue eyes expressed kindness of heart, but beyond fairness of complexion and a similarity in their voices, there were few points of resemblance between the brothers. In their views of things in this life, and beyond it, there was even a more marked contrast. Henry Senior had a pure, simple, childlike faith in all the doctrines of his Church; not a shadow of doubt had ever disturbed his peace. As a preacher he possessed hardly average ability, but as a worker he was indefatigable, and he had the rare knack of drawing the poorer and less enlightened of his flock towards him. Kind, manly, thoroughly sincere, and generous, he was respected and liked by all who came into contact with him. In worldly possessions he could be called well off, but in his father's lifetime he had known plenty of hard work and privations.

During a stay at Cheltenham he had met his wife, Mira Wellery, the second youngest and prettiest of the six daughters of Sir Aubrey Wellery, Baronet, an old gentleman in a chronic state of impecuniosity. Mrs. Senior was now a matronly-looking woman of about thirty. She was a demi-blonde, had a pretty face with a tendency to double chin, and soft brown eyes, rather expressionless. She was considered somewhat accomplished; could paint a little; professed to be very fond of poetry, essaying now and

then to write verses; played very nicely; had a sweet tremolo contralto voice; possessed rather pleasant manners; was chatty, and made herself agreeable to those of her own set. She was thoroughly orthodox, but not the least enthusiastic. Beyond taking a Sunday-school class and assisting in choir services she took no part in her husband's work. Having suffered much from the inconvenience of her father's poverty during her unmarried life, she had learnt to value to the fullest extent the worldly advantage she had of belonging to a good family.

Her husband, too, placid soul, was not a little proud of his wife's family, and it was with some little unction that he was not unfrequently found occasion to allude to "My father-in-law, Sir Aubrey Wellery."

Mrs. Senior, though not possessing what would be termed much character, had a quiet, persistent way of following the bent of her own will; had, in fact, so unshaken a belief in herself that people much more intelligent than she, often found they had to give way to her. She ruled her meek husband firmly, and not always gently. Mrs. Senior looked upon her brother-in-law—well, as a sort of relation one could not exactly be proud of introducing to one's friends.

But when he fell ill she showed a certain amount of solicitude for him that surprised him, and his sickness was the means of establishing between them more friendly feelings than had hitherto existed.

There were two pretty little girls, but Master Aubrey Wellery Senior was the eldest, and was, in consequence, much spoiled. He was thought by his fond father and mother to be a prodigy of wit and wisdom for one so young, and was, on that account, allowed to join in the conversation of his elders at his own sweet will, much to the annoyance of those who were not so appreciative of his precocious talents.

Mr. Henry Senior had this day decided to speak of the news that had reached him during the other's attack of fever anent the friend Smirker's illness, now that his brother was past all danger and well able to stand the shock of disagreeable news.

"John," he said, after the dessert was placed on the table, "you have a very dear friend in Cape Town, a chum, if I mistake not?"

"In Cape Town!" the other replied; "no, the only man whom I could at all look upon as a chum lives in Kimberley; Leonard is his name—a Jew."

"A Jew? how remarkable!" exclaimed Mrs. Senior; "but people do seem to become peculiar when they go to the colonies. What on earth is this friend of yours?"

Jack Senior laughed; he took a pleasure in shocking his sister-in-law, and for this purpose was continually airing his extravagant ideas. "Yes, a Jew," he replied, "and of course a pawnbroker, as you no doubt expected."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Mrs. Senior; "yes, I thought he would be something of the kind."

"Did you? Well, Mira, you are wrong. I suppose you imagine, because you have really seen so little, that all Jews are pawnbrokers or money-lenders. Leonard, you will no doubt be relieved to hear, is a member of the Civil Service, and a gentleman, too, and a great deal better educated than either you or I."

Henry Senior again spoke. "You say you have no particular friend——"

But he was interrupted by a sharp rap at the door, and a trim little servant-maid handed in a telegraphic message on a salver, saying, "Telegram for master, please," and then vanished.

The clergyman, after reading it, exclaimed, "How very strange indeed! The very person I was going to tell you about. Well, one thing, he is evidently better. Here John," and he passed the telegram over to him. The other read as follows:

From E. Smirker.

To H. W. Senior.

"How is your brother? Acquaint him of my arrival. Leaving for London by the two o'clock train. I am going Diamond Cross Hotel, Strand."

John Senior's face, the other observed, grew ashen white, and he trembled weakly. "Strange," the other thought, "he should show so much emotion at the news of his friend's arrival, when only just now he seemed to have forgotten his existence."

"I was just," he said, "in the act of informing you of news I received about this young gentleman's illness, when——"

"But how in the world did she know I was ill?" the other broke in, speaking his thoughts aloud.

"She!" exclaimed the brother; "is this person, then, a woman?"

Mrs. Senior was looking on, bewildered at the emotion and apparent mystery caused by the receipt of the telegram. She had a longing to know what it was all about, and asked, "What is it, Jack? Any bad news?"

But Jack did not answer. Pulling out his watch, he said, "When does the next train leave for London? Let me see; there is one at three, and it is now half-past two. I have just time to catch it." And then he hurried out of the room.

"What is it? What is it, Henry?" anxiously demanded Mrs. Senior, as soon as her brother-in-law had gone.

Aubrey and his two sisters were ordered out of the room. Henry Senior, feeling loth, but knowing it was useless to think of suppressing the fact, mildly informed his wife of the contents of the message, and of the discovery that Smirker, John's friend, had turned out to be of the feminine gender.

At first it rather amused Mrs. Senior, but lively interest soon turned to concern. What if he had become engaged, or perhaps even married, to some most undesirable person? Worse still, what if she should come to England and disgrace them all? Though, as has been observed, she had some little affection for Jack Senior, still, it must be owned her thoughts did not now concern his welfare much, but rather how such a connection as she had already pictured would affect her. Her mind reverted to her sisters. She enjoyed among them no little amount of respect as being the prettiest, the cleverest, and the only one who had secured a husband; but at the same time she was conscious that this superiority created a feeling of envy, which was gratified by disparagement of her husband's family. She was peculiarly sensitive to this, and she felt that if her husband's brother had contracted a mésalliance, her sisters would gladly make the most of it; it would result in a loss of prestige to herself.

"Henry," she began, "I sincerely hope your brother has not got himself into trouble by becoming engaged to some girl who is not of equal birth. He has such strange ideas about these things, has no conception of

what is due either to himself or his relations in such matters. Smirker! what a terrible name! Why, for all we know, he may be married to her. Some shop girl. The next thing we'll know will be her coming down to Eightstone. Well, I think if I were an elder brother I would not sit there doing nothing, but would demand to be told, for the family's sake, who this young woman is, and what her relation is to the young gentleman she has come all the way home from South Africa to see, just because she hears he has been ill."

Henry Senior rose, looking rather guilty.

"Yes," continued his wife, "you had better be quick, for in less than five minutes he will be off to catch the train. My dear, you must be dreaming, surely, to so neglect what is certainly your duty."

The clergyman found his brother in his room, just in the act of closing a portmanteau, into which he had hastily thrown some clothes.

"John," began the elder brother meekly, "who is this Miss Smirker? I hope, John, that you have not——"

But the other, picking up his portmanteau, interrupted him by saying, "No time to talk, Henry, old boy, got to catch train, good-bye." He held out his hand. "Will write to you from London," he added, as he hurriedly left the room, leaving Henry, who had an impression that his athletic brother rather despised him, hurt at the off-hand treatment. He felt greatly disquieted as to the other's welfare, hoping he had not taken some indiscreet step or got entangled with some worthless person.

John Senior caught the train, and in a couple of hours he was at the Waterloo Station. On making inquiries, he ascertained that the mail-boat, the "*Cicero*," had arrived about half-past eleven that morning, and that the train with the passengers and mails was expected to arrive in about half-an-hour's time.

He laid down his bag close to a bookstall, bought a comic paper, and endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to be amused by it. He then walked up and down the platform, glancing at the big station clock from time to time with feverish impatience. What conflicting thoughts rushed through his brain! Could, indeed, it be possible that Cheeky, whom of late he had been so yearning to see once more, would be there in that very station in a few minutes? Per-

haps she might not come by this train. Why, possibly she would not come at all. It might be only a practical joke some South African friend was playing on him. It might be Leonard who had come home and had done this. If it were, by heavens! he would never speak to him again.

But how did Cheeky learn of his illness? This was strange. In her last letter she had been broken-hearted at his silence. That was what had brought her over. She had evidently concluded by his continued silence that he must be ill, and so had come to England to nurse him. This thought of the girl's constant affection and solicitude increased, if possible, his feverish longing to behold her again. He wondered how she would look. He must expect to see her altered; it was eight months since he had left her. In one so young that time would be sure to make a change. She would be taller, of course, and her ideas would be more advanced about things, and—oh! how he longed, as he again glanced at the clock, for the minutes to fly! But at last a porter informed him that the train was coming. Senior looked in the direction pointed—agitated as he saw it approach. When it had stopped, he eagerly scanned the carriage windows and the doors as they opened, but Cheeky he could not perceive. Had she not come, then? He felt terribly depressed at the thought. But he was so excited he could hardly see, for he soon heard a voice calling out "Jack! Jack! oh, Jack!" a voice he knew so well that, like an electric shock, it went straight to his heart, producing there a wild exultant gladness. Yes, there Cheeky was, standing in the doorway of a carriage, leaning out, waving her hand, and her face beaming with the ecstasy she felt at seeing him once more, alive and apparently quite well.

Quickly he was beside her, and quickly was she in his arms.

"Oh, Jack! oh, Jack!" was all she could exclaim, whilst he, his heart being so full, could say nothing.

No need to describe how each felt as they stood with clasped hands, the fulness of their hearts closing their lips. What happiness so intense, what delight so exquisite, as that experienced by two such young hearts, capable of deep affection, at the blissful moment of meeting after separation?

Sister Eva, who had travelled up in the same carriage with Cheeky, watched their meeting. She had conceived a great liking for this pretty girl, and her curiosity to find out why she had come home to England all by herself, was mixed with a genuine interest in her welfare. Cheeky had been so reticent. Disquieting rumours had reached her on board the "Cicero" concerning the girl's antecedents, and now when she saw the warmth of the greeting between the two young people, saw only this young man, unaccompanied by any women folk, she felt a shade suspicious. But she noted that Senior looked like a gentleman, and had a frank, honest face. She quickly resolved to try and find out from him whither her young friend was bound. If everything was as it should be, why had she been so reserved? "Good-bye, Lizzie," she said, as she approached them. "Won't you introduce me to your friend, dear?"

The girl did so, and remarked to her lover, "Sister Eva has been so kind to me all the way home."

Senior tried to think of something polite to say.

"Mr. Senior," said Sister Eva, "I am glad to meet you. Miss Smirker and I have become great friends, and I shall always be glad to hear of her welfare. I can assure you I shall always be deeply interested in her future, and whatever befalls her. You are, I presume, going to take her to her friends here?"

"Yes, oh, yes! of course."

"Well," went on the nurse, not feeling quite satisfied, "as Miss Smirker was unable to give me her address in England, I will be much obliged if you will do so."

"Oh, certainly, with pleasure!" and not being able to think of what else he could do, he gave her his brother Henry's address in Eightstone.

"I hope you will not think me rude, sir," Sister Eva continued, "but may I ask if you young people are engaged? I should think so by appearances," she added as she smiled pleasantly.

Senior felt very awkward and ill at ease; he hated telling lies, but in this case he felt there was nothing else for him to do. The fact that they were lovers had been only too well betrayed by the manner of their greeting, so he answered after a little hesitation, but not in so happy

a tone as such a state should warrant, "Yes, we are engaged."

Sister Eva was far from being reassured by his manner, and plainly showed it by the way in which she suddenly turned to Cheeky and said in a tone which meant much and sounded like a stern rebuke to Senior, "You must promise me, my dear child, that if you ever want a friend you will write to me to the Somerset Hospital at Cape Town, where I shall be returning in a couple of months."

Cheeky promised.

Then Sister Eva turned to Senior, "May I speak to you a moment?" He followed her a few paces aside doubtfully. Sister Eva said, lowering her voice, "You have a good, honest face, sir, and surely you would not——" Here she paused, feeling very awkward, not knowing how to express what she wanted to say. Then she went on again, "No one could surely meditate doing anything that would bring harm to this dear child, so young and so inclined to purity and goodness."

Senior felt conscious of a schoolboy feeling of guilt as he saw the nurse looking fixedly at him, trying to judge him, as it were, by his face. At that moment, touched by her words of thoughtful kindness for the girl he himself so loved, he resolved that whatever was right, no matter how it would hurt him, he would do it. "Sister Eva," he replied, "my aim will be, take my word of honour for it as a gentleman, to do that which is best for her happiness."

Sister Eva now began to think that after all she had misjudged him. Indeed, she must, she thought, have appeared very rude and importunate. But had she not done what she deemed was right?

Cheeky stood watching her lover and Sister Eva, wondering what could be passing between them; she could see that the former was embarrassed.

Just at this moment two of the "Cicero's" second-class passengers happened to be passing. One of them seeing Senior cried, "Hullo, Bob! why there is that bloke that knocked Dooley out in the Diamond Market in Kimberley!" "So it is," rejoined the other; "it was him as took that girl that is alongside of him, out of Mrs. Getit's bar; don't you remember? He kept her for a long time in Kimberley." And then he suddenly added, as if

the idea had just struck him, "Ah! that is how she came home first-class; it has been him as paid her passage." The two men passed on.

Cheeky had never troubled herself to inquire closely into the reason why well-to-do people generally deemed marriage of such great importance. She had lightly thought it was one of the customs of the ranks above her, just as she had, when running bare-footed in Cape Town in her childhood, the same ideas about wearing shoes; nothing wrong to go without them, she opined, but something to be ashamed of in the eyes of those who could afford them. Some of her neighbours, it was true, had gone through the ceremony, and in many cases seemed very miserable afterwards; drunken husbands she had seen beating wives; and wives she had often seen neglecting their husbands and homes. Her mother had often in her hearing expressed her opinion that this was all the result of matrimony. This worthy parent had remarked, over and over again, "Give me my liberty; no marriage for me again; then if a man don't treat you properly you can either kick him out of the house, or be kicked out yourself."

But now when she overheard the remarks of the two passengers her face turned scarlet. The reference to her bar-life made her cheeks tingle. How she wished she had been born a lady, that there was no horrid past to haunt her. Then the words, "he kept her," words that had signified but little before, flashed into her heart a sudden feeling of shame, strange and new, a feeling she could not define, producing a curious sensation of inferiority. Already the prejudices of that class she had been associating with of late were making their impress upon her. How would it be later on?

She felt strangely glad that Sister Eva had evidently not heard the allusion to her past life. This lady now came up talking agreeably to Jack, anxious to atone for her possible injustice to him. After expressing a polite hope that she would have the pleasure of seeing them both again, and with an arch look wishing them the greatest of happiness, she kissed Cheeky affectionately and took her departure.

Senior had Cheeky's luggage put on a cab.

"Now then, Cheeky," he said, "jump in and let us get

away; I suppose, poor girl, you are both hungry and tired."

"Oh! Jack, let me first say good-bye to the others; may I?"

"All right, off you go, only look sharp."

The late passengers of the "Cicero" were occupied, some in looking for their luggage, others in saying farewells. All the cliques were now broken up; people who had been at daggers drawn on board ship were warmly expressing their regrets at separation. All were apparently softened by the feeling of sentiment produced by the moment of parting after a long sea-trip.

Senior had time to observe the change that had taken place in Cheeky since he first met her in the "New Dug Out." What a difference there was in this graceful, lady-like girl, who, with her soft subdued face, walked about with quiet dignity making her adieux to her late fellow-passengers, from the saucy little barmaid listening and laughing so loudly at the questionable stories told by brutes of men. She had grown taller and prettier; her lithe, supple figure was more womanly. Yes, altogether the change was marvellous. He was gratified to see that the girl had apparently got on well with the other lady passengers, many of whom seemed sincerely sorry to say "Good-bye" to her.

At length she returned and got into the cab, Senior following. He told the cabman to drive to Fox's Family Hotel, Holborn. As they started away from the station they were silent for a few minutes, both occupied by troubling thoughts. Cheeky's past was now, as it often did, disturbing her peace, and the words, "he kept her," were still ringing in her ears, producing confusing sensations of disquietude. Senior's mind, unlike Cheeky's, was occupied with the future.

It was dark, and the lamps and shop windows were lighted up.

Cheeky was at an age when remorse does not stay long. The novel sights around her soon attracted her attention. She felt bewildered at the crowds of people of all kinds and conditions continually coming and going, at the endless cabs, buses, and vehicles of all sorts, the blocking of the traffic every now and then, the policeman standing at the cross streets in the midst of it, unharmed, with a

self-conscious air of power, controlling it all by a wave of his hand.

Jack was being continually called to look at this and to look at that, whilst every now and again she would throw her arm round his neck, pull his head down with a jerk, and kiss him, as she gave vent to her feelings in such expressions as, "Oh, you are such a darling, aren't you?" In a very short time the little cloud that had hung over them was dispersed by the bright sun of their youthful spirits, and when they had reached the hotel they were both as happy as they could be.

Fox's Hotel was an old-fashioned-looking three-storied building with a dingy yellow-painted front.

"You stay here until I come back," Senior said as he jumped out of the cab. He entered, and the waiter showing him where the office was, he went there and inquired of the manageress—a tall, dark, middle-aged lady with a hook nose, and general angular appearance—if he, and his wife, who had just arrived from South Africa, could have a room. The manageress, who was responsible for the respectability of the establishment, fixed an eagle eye on him as she asked,

"Have you any luggage?"

"Yes."

"Much?"

"Yes, a good deal."

"What floor would you like your room?"

"First floor, if you can."

The manageress, evidently impressed by the request for a room on the first landing, politely replied, "Yes, sir; No. 7, sir."

A porter was dispatched to carry the luggage up; a trim-looking housemaid sent to see that the room was properly in order, and this person surprised and pleased Cheeky not a little by addressing her as "Mum." "Ah," Cheeky thought with pride, "she takes me for a lady."

A little later the two young people sat down to a hearty meal, then came a talk. Everything that had transpired to both since Senior had left South Africa at all worth mentioning was gone over. Cheeky told him of her life in Cape Town, of her governess, Violet Leon-More, and all about the passage home in the "Cicero." Senior chaffingly asked her if she would now take him in hand

and give him a few lessons ; she must be quite a blue-stocking by this time, he was sure.

The girl laughed, thinking how she really would surprise him with her progress.

At length, tired out with the travelling and excitement, she retired to rest.

After the girl had gone, Senior's mind reverted to Sister Eva and what had passed between that lady and himself. His conscience again became restive.

Was he, he asked himself, prepared to do his duty by Cheeky, who, as Sister Eva had truly said, was so young and so inclined to purity and goodness? No doubt it was a very fine thing for him to hold such independent views about the non-sanctity of marriage. He would not suffer much in the eyes of Society by carrying out these views, but how about the girl? Was little Cheeky still in ignorance of the enormity of the offence she was committing in the opinion of the respectable world? When she got older and wiser and fully appreciated what she had done, would she hold him blameless? And even if, through his influence, and no doubt he could easily bring it about, she were to adopt the views he professed to hold, viz., that they did not sin by living together without being legally married—would it be fair to her? Would not she have to bear all the burden of adverse public opinion, which was a stronger force than written law? What greater misery in this world than to be looked down upon by one's fellow-creatures, no matter how undeserving their contempt! Another thing, was he prepared to live all his life with this girl? If so, why not marry her, and escape all the disagreeableness consequent on going contrary to popular prejudices? Prejudices! Why, if he analysed his own mind and motives, was it not prejudice that strengthened his views, his objections to marriage? It was all very well for him to say that the marriage laws were all wrong, too binding; that through them men and women were often condemned to a life of misery; that no person had a right to swear that he or she would love the other for life. Love was a thing not to be forced. If it came, it came; if it went, it went; and such an oath was wilful perjury. But were not such objections and obstacles exaggerated by the fact that this girl was no lady born; that her mother was a low person; that she had served in

a canteen as barmaid; and, through being such, had been subjected to all the indignities such a position entailed; and that if he married her he would be looked down upon? Yes, his conscience told him that if he wished to act justly to the girl there were only two courses open to him—either break off his present relationship with her, and do his best to fit her for earning her livelihood in a way suitable to her, or to marry her. He had given his word to Sister Eva that his aim would be to do that which he considered best for her happiness. Did he intend to do this? He would not answer that question even to himself. He tried to make peace with his conscience by procrastinating. He needed time to think seriously over the whole thing, he said to himself.

At length he went upstairs. It was late, and, not to disturb the inmates of the different bedrooms, he took off his boots and noiselessly walked along until he came to the door of No. 7, which he found ajar; gently pushing it open, he stepped into the room. Cheeky knelt by the bedside, her hair hanging in rich brown masses about her shoulders. She was only clothed in a nightdress, through which the lines of her symmetrical figure were visible, giving her the grace and appearance of a beautiful statue. She was praying.

This act of devotion, learned from the little children she had seen praying at their mother's knees on board the "Cicero," she found gave her overcharged heart great relief. Every thought and care she poured forth. Like the little children she prayed aloud, and phrased her words like theirs. Not hearing Senior enter, she went on. She was going through a list of her friends, for the protection and blessing of whom she was asking her Heavenly Father. Then she came to her mother: "Oh, Lord! bless my mother and make her good; and, oh, it was so good of you, Jesus, to make Jack so well and strong again. I thank you so much for it! Please don't let him get ill again, and, oh, Jesus, please let me know somehow, whether it is wrong not to get married, and if it is, get Jack to marry me, because I do so want to be good. And all I ask is for Christ's sake; Amen."

Senior, before she had risen, quietly stepped back. "I'll go downstairs," he said to himself, "and smoke another pipe!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHEEKY and Senior only remained two days at Fox's Hotel. The latter decided to go into private lodgings. Not only would it be more homely and comfortable, but there would be less chance of meeting any of his acquaintances.

After a whole morning and half an afternoon spent in searching, they took apartments in Bedford Square.

The furniture of the sitting-room, though old, was pre-tentious, and gave the room a look of seedy grandeur. Two cheap faded landscapes and a portrait of Lord Beaconsfield hung upon the walls, a large gilt-framed mirror was suspended over the mantelpiece, and large curtains, of a whiteness soiled by the contact with countless fogs, adorned the windows.

Large folding-doors communicated with the bedroom, somewhat smaller in size, the furniture of which had the same seedy second-hand appearance.

Senior had purchased a wedding-ring for Cheeky, telling her, when giving it to her, what finger she had to wear it on, feeling confused and awkward as he did so. He hoped the girl would make no remark about it. He had determined to drive away all vexing thoughts about the future, and the fulfilment of what his conscience had told him was his duty towards her. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," he said to himself. "It was nothing but right that the girl should enjoy herself now she had come home. Time enough to think about anything so disagreeable as probable separation."

But Cheeky, when he gave her the ring, softly said, "Jack, do you want people to think we are married?"

"Yes," he said, as he looked curiously at her.

"Why, Jack?"

"Oh! because people have peculiar ideas about that sort of thing. Why, if it were thought we were not married we should not be considered even respectable; so just for the sake of escaping any unpleasantness, it is as well to conform outwardly to such prejudices."

"But why do people think it is wrong for a man and woman to live together unless they marry?"

Senior explained at some length.

"And what do you think?" she asked.

He gave his own views: how often it was that couples after being united for some time discovered that they were hopelessly unsuited to one another, but nevertheless were forced by the restraint of marriage laws to live a life of misery; how love often fled away simply through the consciousness of the irksome bondage imposed upon it by law; that it was a sin, he considered, for people to live together after they had ceased to care for each other; love was the only form of sanctity that should be recognised. "Supposing," he went on, "that you had married a man like that old fellow Maeker. Say you had married him when you were quite a youngster, being persuaded to do so by your parents. Then when you grew up you found what a low, disgusting brute he was. Then, again, say you met afterwards some young fellow whom you learned first to respect, and then to love, he falling in love with you too. Would it not be hard lines that you should have to remain all your life with a beast of a man you heartily detested, who even made you shudder every time he came near you, when, if it were not for the marriage laws, you would be able to leave him, and go and live in the most perfect state of happiness with the other?"

"Yes," said Cheeky, who had conceived the whole of Senior's illustration, naturally putting him in as the young man she was imagined to have met after marriage and learnt to love. "Yes, I can see that; but, Jack——"

"And then you see," Senior went on, interrupting her, "people have to swear to love one another to the end of their lives; and in how few cases do they do this! Why, such an oath almost amounts to wilful perjury. How can anyone tell how long his love can last?"

"But if it be wrong," Cheeky broke in, "to swear to love a person always only because you can't be sure of doing it, though you may think so, it must surely be worse to tell lies in saying you are married when you are not."

Senior laughed, but in rather a forced manner, as he replied, "By Jove! Cheeky, you are a regular little lawyer. But you must bear this in mind: our saying we are married when we are not does no harm to anyone, and it may save a lot of disagreeableness. One cannot

get along in this world without practising a little deception sometimes, and as long as such deception is harmless to others I cannot see that there can be much wrong in it. In fact, it is even right sometimes, as it often saves others from unnecessary pain."

Cheeky was silent for some time, evidently wrapped in thought. At length she spoke. "Jack, is your sister in England?"

After she had asked this question her face suddenly became suffused with blushes. She was conscious of a vague feeling of pique and disappointment, as by a peculiar kind of instinct she felt that, right as Senior might consider it for them to live together unmarried, still, because she was not married to him he would not care to introduce his sister. Oh! and she had so looked forward and longed to meet this woman, of whom she had formed so grand an ideal, and whom it was her ambition to resemble.

Senior looked at her, reading plainly what was passing in her mind, and a feeling of compassion welled up in him for the poor little soul who so thirsted after the good. He kissed her. "Cheeky, you are simply an angel," he said. "My sister is at this present moment in Ireland. Poor girl! she has been most unfortunate. Just the very day she got the letter telling her of old Cumming's death, and what she had been left, like the rest of us, and was on the eve of departure for England, the children of her lady friend, whom she was visiting, fell ill with scarlet fever one after the other. Of course, under these distressing circumstances, she could not think of leaving, so she stayed, she and the mother taking in turn the nursing. But the two youngest children died, and the mother got so ill from fatigue and grief that I believe her mind has been affected. My sister is now attending upon her."

Cheeky said nothing. Senior's sister out of England seemed to lessen the feeling of wounded sensibility; but still, she felt as if she had missed one of the principal things she had looked forward to.

"Jack," she said, "oh, I do so want to ask you something. I have been bothering myself about it so much, only I did not like to ask anyone. Violet told me what she thought, and I never asked her, either; but then she

might have said it only to please me. Now I want you to promise to tell me nothing but the truth; don't try to deceive me because, perhaps, you think it will do no harm, and you don't want to hurt my feelings. Promise me, Jack, just to tell me the exact truth."

Senior promised, wondering what was coming now.

"Would you, if you did not know me, take me for a lady? I mean if you saw me in the street, or heard me speak to anyone?"

Senior laughed, and the little girl waited with anxious face and parted lips for his answer.

"Oh, you vain girl!" he said. "Well, I'll tell you the truth. When I saw you saying good-bye the other day at the station to the lady passengers, I took particular stock of the lot, and I thought to myself that you looked prettier, more graceful, and a great deal more of a lady than any one of them."

"Oh! do you really mean it? Oh, I am so glad!" she cried, as her face beamed with pleasure. "Oh! it's all your doing, every bit of it. Kiss me;" and after embracing him she danced round the room in the highest of spirits.

Senior found, much to his delight, that she had made wonderful progress in her studies. He was, indeed, astounded. But the change which pleased him most was that which had taken place in her mind and character. Although still girlish, she was no longer the uncultured child who used to amuse him with her funny idioms and artless ways. No; he now found in her a companion with a mind comprehensive, sympathetic, and original.

Senior's ideas were, if not unique, inclined to run in channels different from those prescribed by the majority; and like many people who differ from those around them, he was apt to exaggerate and, in a spirit of defiance, go to extremes.

Now it was an idea of his that the innocence of the young girl of the better classes was altogether a mistake, that this lauded innocence was only ignorance of a dangerous kind, and very far from being bliss. He contended that it would be better for young girls really to know more of the world, more of human nature, to have a more intimate knowledge of the seamy side of life; then

they would be more independent, make better wives and mothers, and be more able to elevate their fellow-creatures, and help to quell the evil and vice so thick around them.

He had commenced to mould Cheeky's character, and, so far, he gave himself credit for entire success, though unconsciously exaggerating the effects of his methods, and making too little of the girl's natural goodness. Now he would continue his system.

He took her to see the principal sights in London, some bewildering, some interesting, some boring, and others amusing her.

They went to the theatres. Tragedy frightened and made her nervous; but operas, comic and all kinds, enchanted her. She was intensely fond of music. Taking the precaution of having her thickly veiled, Senior took her to many of the music halls; but though at first she was interested at the wonderful acrobats, the clever jugglers and conjurers, the graceful dancers, the ventriloquists and their funny figures, the sensational aerial performers at the Westminster Aquarium, she soon wearied of their monotonous performances. The low comedians with their vulgarity and costermonger patter, the dress-suit music-hall gentleman-artist, who strutted about the stage with jaunty walk and elbows out, taking off his hat with graceful sweeps, disgusted her. And the suggestive song still then in vogue, which delighted the patrons of the music hall so much—how they would roar and applaud, and turn round and look at one another for appreciative sympathy when something coarse, without the slightest pretence to wit, was said or sung—to Cheeky only gave pain. It reminded her of the days when she, too—she quivered with shame to think—used to be amused by the same sort of thing. By night and early morn they traversed the Strand, Piccadilly, Regent Street, Oxford Street, and many other thoroughfares and quarters too numerous to detail. They visited the most fashionable localities, and went by 'bus to the East-End, and "did" the slums, and although sometimes insulted, they were never otherwise interfered with. They looked into the flaring gin palaces frequented by all sorts of degraded, besotted wretches, male and female, who mystified the girl with their meaningless words, the phrases and conversations that emanated from their dull, liquor-soaked brains.

Cheeky had witnessed what was considered poverty at the Cape, but never had she conceived such degrading depths of it as she now saw in this, the wealthiest city in the world. Here she saw vice clothed in its most attractive garbs, and in its most unwholesome, foul-smelling rags. It was unnecessary for Senior to draw this observant companion's attention to the terrible incongruity of things, the seemingly one-sided distribution of wealth; to point out how profligates, young and old, scattered their money about, squandering it on women, wine, and feasting, tipping sleek, well-conditioned waiters with gold, whilst on the other hand, right in the midst of this great dissoluteness, numbers of ill-clad, half-starved creatures—crossing-sweepers, vendors of toys, flowers, laces, matches, and newspapers, shivered as they stood all day long, and some of them far into the night, trying to earn a few miserable pence.

All this she noticed, and many a night was she kept awake thinking, grieving, and puzzling over it. But that which made the deepest impression on her heart was the overwhelming number of unfortunate women, and the great beauty that many of them possessed—that quality which so quickly stimulates our sympathies. There they were, after dusk, to be met with everywhere, like swarms of locusts, in theatres, music halls, supper-rooms, public-houses, driving in cabs and carriages, on the top of 'buses, crowding everywhere the thoroughfares; seemingly of all shades of grades. At the bottom of this ladder of vice was the miserable bloated wretch of soiled and ragged appearance, whose haunts were in the East End; half-way up the ladder was the class that crowded the third-rate music halls, who frequented the Strand, who hung around the entrance to Charing Cross Station with a hungry perseverance in the coldest nights and amidst the most pitiless rains; and at the top rung of the ladder was the cleverer and more ambitious woman, richly dressed and bejewelled, with affected manners and speech, who promenaded the lounges of the more pretentious music halls, the self-styled theatres of varieties, and who looked down with haughty aristocratic contempt on her humbler fallen sisters.

Often and many were the questions asked by Cheeky concerning these poor women, the victims of circumstances,

more sinned against than sinning. Ah! many is the kind, even noble, heart, many the pure and unselfish deed done, not for the praise of men, amongst these poor castaways, among whom are some of the fairest of England's daughters; whose name it is even a sin to mention amongst those who profess to follow that Master who looked with such tender forgiving love and compassion on her who bathed His feet; whose life at the best is only that of a butterfly, for as their beauty fades, so, step by step, rung by rung, down the ladder they slip until the bottom is reached, and then soon that end which comes to every one of us, poor or rich, virtuous or not; and these poor sisters of ours have the comforting thought, the consolation that having lost all that brings joy, and only secured that which brings sorrow and despair, they have nothing to lose but all to gain when returning to rest on the soothing breast of their mother-earth, to sleep the painless and dreamless slumber of eternity.

One night shortly after eleven, Cheeky and Senior were walking along the Strand. The theatres were fast emptying themselves, crowding the street. 'Bus-conductors were loudly yelling their different destinations, vying with one another in securing passengers. Hansoms were in great demand, their doors, as they drew up to the pavement, being opened obsequiously by poor ragged-looking creatures in the hope of so earning a copper from the well-dressed fares of both sexes. The brightly-lighted bars were filling fast with the many thirsty ones anxious to make the most of the short time left, even at this hour. A slow but cold rain was falling, and the many open umbrellas added to the crowded appearance of the side walks.

Under the glare of a lamp-post stood a girl bare-footed, with draggled and ragged skirt, and round her shoulders a soiled plaid shawl; on her head was a tawdry hat with a limp black feather that curled into her eyes. One hand was resting on the lamp-post; in the other she held some boxes of matches—her stock-in-trade. With wistful eyes she was looking across to the other side in an upward direction. Senior drew Cheeky's attention to her; they followed her gaze. There on the second storey of a music hall just lately opened, were supper-rooms with luxurious fittings and brilliant lights, giving to the rooms an appearance of voluptuous warmth. The large windows

had no blinds, evidently left without them for the sake of advertising the new opening. Close to one of the windows at a table, partaking seemingly of supper, sat a party of three, two men in evening dress, one old, grey-whiskered, and bald-headed, the other young, fair, and good-looking, and between them a beautiful-looking woman, resplendent in rich and gaudy attire, gems and jewels sparkling on her arms, head, and neck. A waiter was filling and refilling their glasses with champagne. They were apparently in high spirits by the way they were laughing, talking, and gesticulating.

"I wonder, now," said Senior, "why that girl is staring so at those people up there?"

"Perhaps," said Cheeky, "the poor girl is thinking how unjust the world is, how that woman up there, who is most likely no good by the look of her, is having it so warm and comfortable, with plenty to eat and drink, and beautiful dresses, jewels and all, whilst she, poor girl, is cold, hungry, and miserable through trying to do her best to earn an honest living."

"Well done, Cheeky! 'pon my word, that would do for a sentimental novel; but I hardly think that is what is passing in her mind; what do you say if I ask her?"

Senior then went close to the waif. "What are you staring at, my girl?" he asked.

"Look there! look there!" she replied excitedly, pointing to the supper party, but not taking her eyes off them.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Ain't they 'aving a feed!"

"Well?"

"I give you my word I would like some of it down 'ere. I ain't 'ad nothink since late last night, and then I only 'ad a 'doorstep.'"

And next, turning to him a face pinched with hunger, coarse and hideous by inheritance and vilest associations, she asked, "Do you know who that gal is? No? Well, she is my sister," she added, in a tone expressive of no little pride.

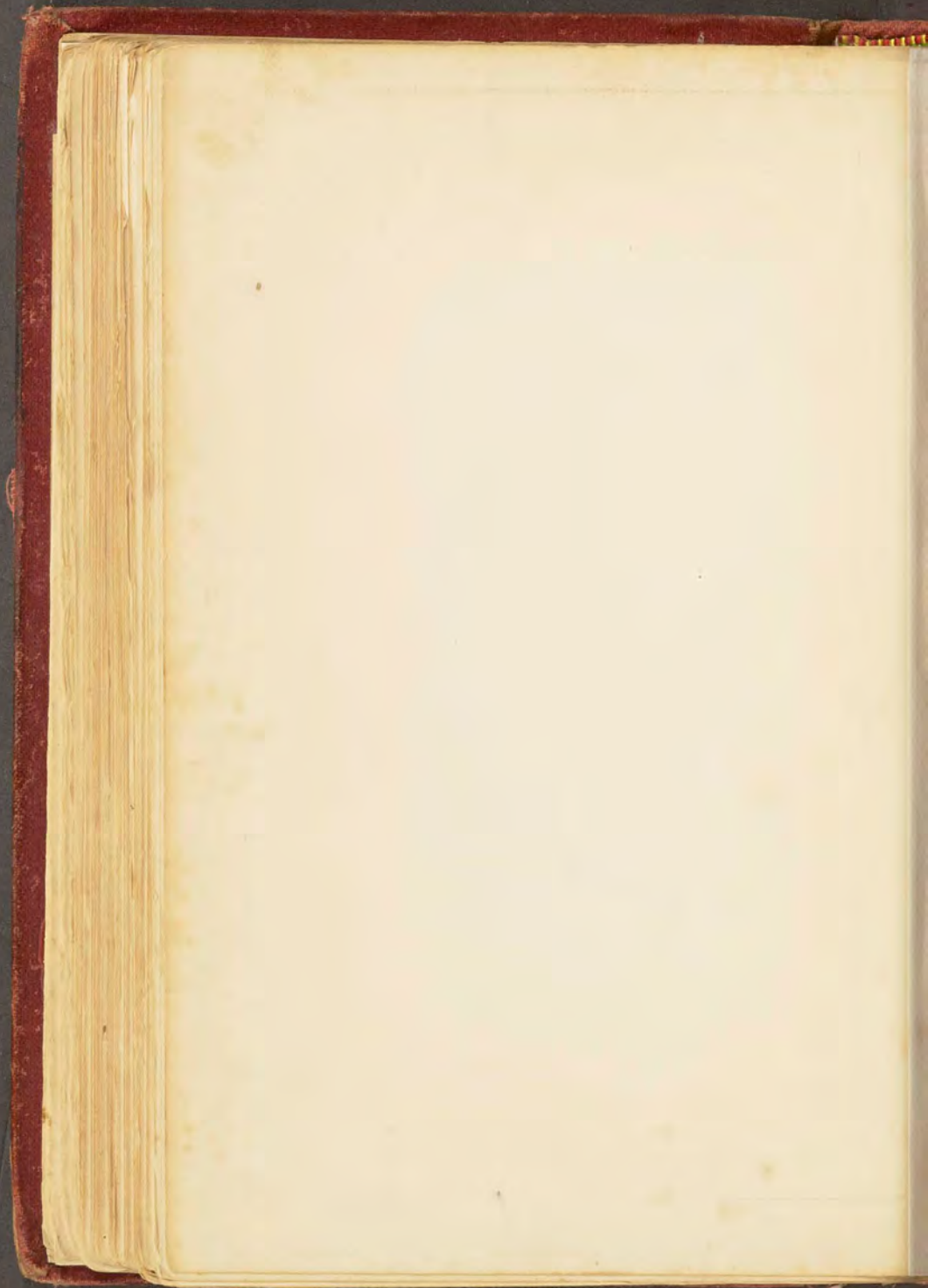
"Would you like to change places with her?"

Cheeky listened anxiously to hear what the girl would say.

"Would a donkey like hoats?" she replied in a tone



She asked, "Do you know who that gal is? No? Well, she is my sister," she added in a tone expressive of no little pride.—Page 222.



of disgust at such a silly question. "Ah, well," she went on, "some gals 'as luck; I ain't, that's certain. Moll was allus a foine gal,—'ansome, you know. I was born hugly. But if I was in 'er plaice I wouldn't be too stuck up, or ashaamed to hown my hown sister; it would not be me as wouldn't part a bob or two now and agen, with all the gentlemen friends, toffs, as she 'as, I give you my word!" Suddenly thinking of business, she changed her loud, coarse voice into a doleful whine, and said, "Kind lady and gentleman, please buy a box of lights, please spare a copper, kind gentleman; I hain't had nothink to eat sin—Thank you, kind gentleman; God bless you, kind gentleman," she concluded, as Senior dropped a shilling into her hand and walked on.

"Well, Cheeky, I don't think you were quite right in your guess as to what she was thinking of. How gladly she would change places with her sister, and what wonder! Compare the conditions of the two, the cold, hunger, and perpetual misery of the one, with the warmth comfort, and luxury of the other. It is all very well for people who do not know what it is to crave for the necessities of life to rant and talk about the inestimable importance of virtue in women—in men, of course, it does not matter so much. A highly-respectable girl of the upper classes, who would hasten to sell herself in marriage for money, would not be able to use words harsh enough to condemn that miserable, half-starving creature for wishing to exchange places with her sister. Is it not ridiculous?"

"Well, Jack, it is how they are brought up, I suppose."

"Yes, you are quite right, the way they are brought up; and none have the courage to think for themselves. People wonder how it could have been possible to have endured life in the olden days, but, by Jove! in future time—say, a hundred years or so—people will wonder a great deal more how we, in this enlightened nineteenth century, could have lived and been happy in the midst of all this wretchedness and misery. Think of how one reads in the daily papers of whole families dying of starvation, whilst others again spend their time in trying to devise new kinds of pleasure in which to squander the money that to the poor would mean food and health!

"Now take the position of women in this overcrowded

country; see how the blind prejudices of society help to drive them to vicious ways. There are as many women born in the world as men—more, in fact. The very few honest paths that are grudgingly opened up to allow them to earn their living cannot by any possible means employ them all; nor can marriage. Now what is to become of those who have no fathers, husbands, or brothers to support them? Why should not the poor women of all classes, who are weaker than we, be permitted the same chance of earning a livelihood, be allowed their independence? Every calling and trade, every profession for which they are physically adapted, should be opened up to them. The men, most of them, profess to believe themselves stronger and nobler; well, they ought to show it by being chivalrous enough, not only to give them a fair show, but even to give way to them."

"But Jack," Cheeky broke in, "there seem to be a great many more poor men knocking about the streets than poor women."

"Yes, and so there are, but look at the thousands and thousands of women whom we see prowling about the streets and everywhere. If it were not for that channel of vice open to them, what would become of them? It makes me ill to hear idle dreamers say in fine-sounding phrases that it is man's function alone to fight the stern battle of life, to strive for reforms; that it is woman's to cheer, to soothe, to attend the wounded who fall in the strife. All very pretty for poets to sing this, and declare that women would lose their womanliness, that their purity would be sullied by fighting side by side with the men to win their bread. Good Lord, deliver us! Look over there at the entrance to that station [they were now opposite Charing Cross]. Look at these poor wretches walking up and down, trying to attract the men passing by, and the policemen shoving and making them move along. Is it any pleasure for them, that life, waiting there in all weathers, in all hours, for the chance of securing their prey? How many of these poor girls have been driven to that life from sheer necessity, I wonder! Talk about the purity of women being sullied—a fine alternative it is that is left to many of them! And why should so many women be forced to accept matrimony as their only chance in life? It makes them deceitful, develops a love of

vanity, makes them stoop to low and petty devices to attract suitors, having to call attention to their charms as horse-dealers do to the best points of horses. I saw a letter the other day in the *Daily Telegraph* from some poor craven wretch of a telegraph clerk, complaining grievously about the employment of women in that branch of the service; that, owing to such numbers being employed, wages were low and promotions slow. The brute ought to be flogged."

Cheeky was much impressed; she thought Jack the wisest man on earth; everything he said she accepted as absolute truth. She often wondered how other people were so blind as not to see as he did.

"But, Jack," she asked timidly, "what would become of all the men, if half of them had to give up their situations to women?"

"Well," Senior said grandly, "the men being the stronger and better able to stand privation and hardship, could emigrate to countries yet unpeopled, and become the pioneers of wider civilisation."

And this young girl of the people, who had already seen many phases of the seamy side, how did these new experiences affect her? This girl who had been born and brought up amidst vileness, who had had the worst of examples shown her by her own mother, who had been taught to look upon right as wrong, and wrong as right? Surely it was unwise to bring her again amongst evil, to show her the many and varied forms of vice, attractive and the reverse?

Not long ago the son of a powerful Kaffir-chief was sent to England to be educated. He showed ability of a marked kind, progressed most favourably with his studies, and, in due time, took his degree at one of the Universities. On his return to South Africa, to the surprise of everyone who knew him, back he went to his tribe, discarding the garb and customs of civilised life, once more donning the blanket of the raw Kaffir, and resuming the habits and ways of his early life.

But what is food for one is poison for another. This poor waif, who had sprung from the gutter, was richly endowed by Nature with many virtues. Well it was, perhaps, that Senior, with all his errors, had been her mentor, for under the bright sunshine of her love for him,

the sweet dews of his gentleness—that goodly seed-bud that fell from the Sower and penetrated her heart the first night of their meeting—had now grown into a strong and beautiful plant. Its roots had spread deep and wide in the fruitful soil, and now were but refreshed by the sweet fountains of pity that overflowed at the sights of sadness she saw around her.

CHAPTER XXV.

Two months after Cheeky's arrival in London she fell ill. All the anxiety and suspense consequent on the sudden cessation of Senior's letters, the news of his severe illness, the conflicting thoughts and emotions caused by the many new experiences since leaving South Africa, affected a mind highly impressionable, which, besides having only just passed through the chrysalis stage of girlhood into womanhood, had been forced into rapid growth like a plant in a hothouse.

At first she complained of pains in the head, a singing in the ears, a feeling of weakness, exhaustion, and sleeplessness. These symptoms came on gradually, and Senior thought her indisposition only a slight passing one, due probably to the change of climate. Then the girl began to fancy that all those with whom she came in contact seemed to slight her. She imagined that all the boarders and the landlady had, somehow, found out that she was not married, and consequently looked down upon her. Then she suffered terribly from mental depression; her past was continually haunting her like an evil nightmare. Gradually the symptoms became more aggravated, and, one evening, as Senior was reading to her, she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

Thoroughly alarmed, he then asked the landlady to kindly send for a medical man at once.

In due time Dr. Buckit came. He was a young man of about two-and-thirty, of rather seedy appearance; but he had a sharp, firm look in his thin face that prepossessed Senior at once. He sat down beside the girl, and chatted

away in an affable manner, quietly ascertaining the nature of her ailment.

"Ah," he said, "she has just come from South Africa. Perhaps," he went on, addressing Senior, "you have been taking your wife about a good deal, sight-seeing—theatres, and all that sort of thing?"

Senior gave Dr. Buckit some idea of the life they had been leading, whereupon the other shook his head and said, "May I ask what the lady's age is?"

"Seventeen next month. Is not that so, Cheeky?"

The girl nodded her head, looking very dejected, as a deep sob every now and then shook her frame.

The doctor expressed great surprise at the youthfulness of the patient, "though you look even younger," he hastened to add; "but I suppose women marry very young out there," he hazarded.

Then he talked to Cheeky in a nice, easy, comfortable way. He told her he knew what was the matter: only a little nervousness; he would give her something he would guarantee would put her right in no time. He then rose to take his leave, and, shaking hands with her, promised to come and see her the next day; and after motioning to Senior that he wanted to speak to him, he left the room.

On the landing Senior inquired anxiously what was the matter.

Dr. Buckit informed him that his wife was suffering from an acute attack of nervous exhaustion, in all likelihood brought on by too much mental excitement. "She was," he said, "evidently of a highly sensitive nature, and would have to be kept perfectly quiet and at rest. Physic was not much use in her case. Senior must try and amuse her in some way that would not excite her too much, just to try to take her thoughts off herself. People with her complaint suffered as a rule from hypochondria. A little light reading from time to time might be a good thing." The doctor advised him as soon as his wife was a little stronger to take her to the country for a change.

"No," he replied to Senior's inquiry, "nothing serious as yet, but great care will have to be exercised," and then he put his forefinger to his forehead significantly.

Senior attended Cheeky with the greatest care, carrying out the doctor's instructions to the letter. He read to her,

told her stories he invented himself, and did everything he could think of to amuse without exciting her. But she got worse.

The doctor came every day, and soon began to alarm Senior by the seriousness of his face. One day he admitted, "No, she is not progressing as favourably as I should have expected." It was her mind he feared for, if she did not soon take a turn for the better. He hinted about having a consultation shortly if she did not improve; there was no immediate danger. Would it not be advisable for Senior, he asked, to get some lady friend to come and stay with the girl? Women made much better nurses than men. But the girl overheard this and protested vehemently. No; she would have no other near her except Jack. He must never go out of her sight. She was going to die—she felt sure of it.

Poor Senior, when he heard her say this, felt ready to choke with emotion. He was worn out with anxiety and fatigue, and hardly ever closed his eyes, as Cheeky cried hysterically half through the night.

That same evening, as the wind was blowing in strong gusts, shaking the slates and rattling the windows, the rain coming down in torrents—Cheeky had had her usual cry—Senior's mind reverted to the evidently serious way in which the doctor now thought of the patient, and to his suggestion to get some lady to help to nurse her. "Ah!" thought he, "if only Helen were here, how soon she would, like an angel of light, dispel the sickening despair and darkness that assailed him; how quickly would she breathe sweet comfort and hope; how, with her sympathetic heart and keen perceptions, she would devise the method to take the girl's thoughts away from herself! It was that that was retarding her recovery." And poor Cheeky had been so disappointed that day when she suddenly realised that she could not know his sister. If marrying her would only bring Helen to him now, how quickly he would do it! How small, oh, how petty seemed to him at this moment his prejudices as to birth, his fears as to what others might think! Like snow before a midsummer sun such considerations melted away before his love, now intensified to a white heat by the terrifying thought that he might lose her.

"Cheeky," he said impulsively, "I want to ask you a question."

"Yes," whispered the girl.

"I have been thinking lately that I should like to marry you; to secure you, so as to make you mine by law, as well as by love. Would you be willing?"

"Oh, Jack, I should like to be your real true wife!"

"Tell me why, dearest."

"Because, Jack, you would always then be mine; even if you ceased to love me I could claim you. I should not let you go, but try to win your love back again. And then there would be no need for being untruthful, and I should not be thinking, as I have lately, that everyone was looking down upon me. And—and——"

"Yes, go on."

"Well, Jack, you would not then mind introducing me to your sister, and I have been longing so to know her, just to lay my head upon her breast, and confess all my wickedness, and ask her to teach me how to be good, like herself."

"Well, Cheeky, now listen, dearest; as soon as you are better, we will get married; so now look sharp, please, and get well and strong again, because I am in a hurry."

"Oh, Jack, you are so good! you have made me feel better already."

"Well, dearest, go to sleep if you can; you'll never get better, you know, if you don't sleep. Now, just to please me, try to go to sleep."

"Yes, Jack, I *will* try."

A pleasing sensation arose in Senior's mind now; a satisfied feeling that at last he had fairly made up his mind to do the right thing, that which his conscience had dictated was his duty towards the girl. But how often do we mistake our motives and take credit when there is no credit due? Was it not his dread of losing her whose companionship and love had become absolutely needful to him that inspired him with the faint hope, like that of a drowning man clutching at a straw, that this offer of marriage might in some way alleviate the terrible distress of mind and body she was suffering from?

Cheeky nestled closer into her lover's arms as she

experienced a sweet feeling of possession. The terrifying past began to assume softer hues; pleasing thoughts of enjoying the sympathy and friendship of Helen Senior in the future occupied her mind. Then the howling of the storm outside turned her thoughts to the many homeless wretches, the numbers of poor fallen women trudging the streets, sad, wet, and weary. As she thought of them a soft feeling of compassion, mixed with a peculiar kind of sad, cosy satisfaction at being so warm and comfortable whilst others were so miserable, took possession of her, and soothed her disquieted nerves. Then the weird sougling of the wind, the patter of the big rain-drops on the window, harmonising with her feelings like the music of a melody, lulled her into a refreshing sleep.

She slept till late next morning. The crisis had been passed, the long-looked-for turn for the better had taken place. In three days' time she was so much stronger and improved that Dr. Buckit said to Senior, "Lose no time; take her into the country." Richmond, he suggested; he had a friend staying there, a medical man whom he could recommend, and to whom he would write and give full particulars of the case. A little exercise on the river would be a capital thing for the patient, but not to overdo it; and no excitement, Senior was to remember.

Accordingly Senior went to Richmond and secured a room in a quaint little cottage on the outskirts of the town.

He hired a wherry and took Cheeky for long pulls on the river, which she soon got to love, and it was not long before she learnt to scull.

Many were the admiring glances that were cast at the young girl, who rowed so well.

It was the month of May; everything was looking fresh, green, and bright. Quickly the roses came back to the girl's cheeks, the fits of depression vanished, and soon she lived in an atmosphere laden with love, smiling in perpetual sunshine. In her mind one thought was dominant—Jack was going to marry her, he would be hers for ever, and his sister would be her sister, too. These were moments to be remembered in after years—their brightness enhanced by the lapsing of time.

And Senior's happiness was almost as complete. He loved the country, loved the river. With such a sweet companion it was simply bliss. A load had been lifted off his mind by her recovery.

But his contentment was tinged by a shade of vexation. He was going to keep his word and marry her, but now that she was well and strong the old prejudices about birth, and fears of what others would think, came back. In his imagination he saw the coarse, brutal face of a low woman, his future mother-in-law, rise up like a hideous scarecrow, trying to frighten him away from the contemplated union.

Cheeky and Senior made exploring excursions up the river from Richmond to Oxford, putting up at the picturesque country inns. Swinging along at brisk pace, Cheeky keeping step, they would go for long walks, down through lanes clothed on each side by soft verdure of varied hues; through shady avenues with the sky peeping blue through the branches of the trees; in amongst sweet-scented glades, green valleys, meadows, and park land, through quaint old-fashioned villages, past dainty little cottages nestling cosily amidst foliage and flowers, and by the silvery, ever-gliding river; drinking in the soft, restful beauty of English scenes.

One night they were on the river, Cheeky was steering. It was a beautiful mild night; the sighing of a gentle breeze, the soft moonlight glinting through waving branches and breaking into silvery fragments upon the clear river, and the gentle splash of the oars as the boat glided through the glistening water, produced in Senior a delicious feeling of content. The girl was singing softly. Her sweet pathetic voice stirred her lover's mind into ripples of dreamy thought. He felt as if he would like to glide on and on like this for ever.

Suddenly she stopped singing. "This is the fifteenth of May, you know, Jack"—after a thoughtful pause.

"Yes, dear?"

"In two days it will be the seventeenth."

"Of course it will," he replied, with a little laugh.

"Then, Jack, you have forgotten, my birthday; don't you remember? I shall be as old as the month then—seventeen."

"Oh! by Jove, that is so! Fancy! I had clean for-

gotten! we must go into town and get something for a present."

Then, after a little pause, in soft tones he said, "Do you remember what we were to do the first time we went to town?"

"Yes, Jack, you said we should get married."

"Well, now, we shall go and get married on your birthday. I shall make you a birthday present of myself."

Cheeky said nothing, but sat thinking, strangely moved. At last, feeling that she must do something to give relief to her feelings, she asked to take the sculls, and then sent the boat scudding through the water.

Senior decided to get married by special licence. He did not know exactly what was to be done to obtain this. He must ask a lawyer.

Next day the two took train to Waterloo Station. They intended returning to Richmond immediately after the ceremony. The day being fine they walked from Waterloo Station to their rooms in Bedford Square.

It would be nice, he thought, after their stay in the country to have a look at all the shop-windows as they went along.

Just as they turned from Oxford Street into Tottenham Court Road, a lady, whom they did not notice, coming up New Oxford Street, seemed suddenly interested when she saw them; she tried to overtake them. She was young and rather tall. Her dress was of the plainest, so much so that the total absence of any attempt at ornament gave her attire something of a masculine appearance. She evidently advocated the hygienic style of costume. Her shoes were broad and low-heeled; she wore a man's soft felt hat, with a plain jacket and skirt, and it was evident to the onlooker that her shapely and stately figure was unencumbered by stays. When Senior, by means of a latchkey, let Cheeky and himself into the house in Bedford Square, the lady was still fifty yards behind. When she got to the house she rang the bell with great energy, quickly bringing forward the landlady, who was startled by the sharp summons.

"Who are the lady and gentleman who have just passed in?" the woman upon opening the door was asked with unceremonious haste.

"What?" she repeated, "do you mean Mr. and Mrs. Senior?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Senior!" the other repeated. "Do they stay here?"

"Yes, on the first floor."

"Show me their apartments, please."

Senior and Cheeky were in the front room, and the girl, who had thrown herself down in an easy-chair in the recess of one of the windows which she had opened, was hidden behind the white curtains. Senior was abstractedly looking at the reflection of his sunburnt visage in the mirror over the mantelpiece. A sharp rap came at the door. Before he had time to ask, "Who is there?" in walked the lady.

"Jack!" she cried. "Oh, I have been searching all over London for you!" And then she took him to her arms and kissed him with affectionate warmth.

Cheeky looked on in amazement from between the curtains, too much surprised to understand; but suddenly her heart gave a great thump as she caught sight of the woman's grave, beautiful-face. Ah! well she divined who it was, and how nervously excited she became. Then a dreary heaviness of soul assailed her. At last she beheld Helen Senior! but—but she had come one day too soon!

CHAPTER XXVI.

HELEN, after having embraced her brother, hurriedly exclaimed, "But, Jack, where is your wife? Oh, I am so anxious to see her! Just fancy your being married indeed, and never telling us! Where is she? Oh, there she is!" And spying Cheeky in the recess she ran quickly and put her arms round the girl's neck, kissed her affectionately, and called her "My dearest sister." Then leading her by the hand to the centre of the room, she turned her to the light, lifting up her face, and after looking at her long and steadfastly, she said with an air of sincerity and evident satisfaction, "Yes, I shall love you for your own sake!"

In Cheeky, Helen saw the reflection of the great good within, and something, she knew not what, drew her

towards her. Cheeky, when she heard these words of loving, trustful hope, felt for a moment as if a ray of sunshine had permeated her whole being, but soon there returned the pain. She felt like an impostor. Ah! why could she not have waited just another day before coming? Helen Senior then led her to the couch. They sat together, the elder still retaining the other's hand. Helen could not take her eyes off her; she kept gazing at her with long attention.

"And what is your name, my sister?" she inquired.

"Eliza Smirker," Cheeky innocently answered.

"Eliza Smirker! My dear child, 'Senior' you mean! You are married to my brother, are you not?" she asked, bewildered.

Senior, feeling very ill at ease and embarrassed at the advent of his sister, hastened to say, "What a question, Helen! Of course she is married to me; she thought you meant what was her maiden name!" And then hurriedly he commenced to ask his sister questions regarding herself. When did she come home? Had she been down to Kent yet? How had she left Mrs. Neville, the friend she had been visiting in Ireland? Helen answered these inquiries abstractedly, still looking intently at Cheeky; then suddenly turning to her brother, she said, a little impatiently, "How is it you have never told Henry or anybody about your marriage? Why, the first intimation I received was just now from the old lady who opened the door for me. I caught sight of you turning up Tottenham Court Road as I was coming up New Oxford Street. I was not at all sure it was you. Oh, I felt so excited! I have been here for the last few weeks, staying with the Greys at Kensington, and I have been hunting everywhere for you. But tell me, Jack, how is it you have never written a word to Henry since you left Eightstone? They are in a great state of mind about you. I must write at once and tell them I have found you, and that you are married. Tell me, when did it happen? I must, of course, give them full particulars."

Her brother's mind was in a whirl of confusion. He felt, however, that he must reply without hesitation, if he did not wish to incur her suspicions, so he returned

somewhat hastily, "We were married in Cape Town on the 15th of last October."

"October," she repeated, "why, you were staying with Henry then."

"Oh, so I was; what an ass I am! May, was it? May it was, I remember now."

"Well, you are a strange fellow," she returned, "not to remember the date of such a very important event. Are you quite sure you have it right now? Has he, Eliza? You, of course, remember."

Cheeky could find no words to respond; she could only shake her head as she felt the blood recede from her face and a blinding sensation of bewilderment.

Helen Senior looked at her and then at her brother with surprise—perfectly mystified. It did seem incomprehensible that neither of them should be certain of the day on which they took such an all-important step.

"Yes, yes," Senior broke in; "it is funny that I should have made such a mistake. It was on the 17th of last May."

"But you said the 15th just now, Jack."

"Did I? How strange!" he said, in an agony of confusion. "No, it was the 17th; I remember now."

Then Helen, smiling, said in half jest, but without the least mistrust, "Jack, you had better go and fetch the marriage certificate, and then you'll be quite certain."

His guilty conscience made him take in serious earnest the request. She was somewhat suspicious, he thought. Ah! his brother's wife's doing, most probably.

He was desperate. What could he do now? He decided to tell his sister the whole truth, and stand or fall by the consequences.

"Helen," he said, and he felt his voice trembling, "come, let us go for a walk; I have something to tell you."

The woman felt a sudden and undefined fear enter her heart as she noted the troubled look in his face; she rose, and without a word passed through the door which he opened for her.

They walked through Montagu Place, and passed into Russell Square. Helen was conscious of a hungry

impatience for him to break the silence. Apprehension was weighing painfully upon her.

Senior tried his utmost to force himself to begin, but his lips refused to move. Too well he realised what a terrible shock the truth would be to her. It would stab her to the core. How he would sink in her estimation! What a blow to the fabric she had built, to the conception she had formed of him! Then a voice, a Jesuitical one, whispered, "Did not this woman's high opinion make him a better man? Did not her beautiful belief make him strive to some extent to deserve it? Why should he needlessly destroy so good and healthy an influence?" Then, prompted by motives in which generosity and selfishness were curiously interwoven, he resolved not to avow the truth.

Helen Senior had been brought up in the country. Her friends of her own sex had been few, and, like herself, ignorant of much of the wickedness of the world. Her associations had all her life been of the purest. She had personally come into contact with nothing that deviated from the narrow path of morality hedged in by prejudice, which was laid down and accepted by the women of her class. Long before she had reached the years of discretion, her heart had been irresistibly attracted and won by the beautiful and poetic tale of Christ giving Himself up to be crucified for the salvation of sinners. But her religious enthusiasm did not find, like many other zealots', an outlet in pomp of ceremonial, the burning of incense, a vent in outward observances, or create a craving after the forms of hieratic life. Simple in worship, her religion took the more practical direction of striving to elevate both herself and those around her, and of trying to alleviate the sorrows of the suffering. She was naturally ambitious, and had she been a man would have made a mark in the world, but, being a woman, her ambition became concentrated in the attempt to do good. Her selfishness was only of the most attractive kind: apart from any sense of duty, she loved to make those around her happy for the pleasure it brought her. Unfortunately, her mind, like Senior's, was analytical, and soon after she reached womanhood she underwent tortures from the doubts that sometimes came unsought and unforeseen. Strong reasoning powers were at variance with

the acceptance of any dogma by Faith alone; but an earnest, poetical nature clung to the beautiful conception of "Jesus as God made manifest in the flesh." True sentiment attached itself, like the tendrils of a fragrant plant, to the sweet supports and calm joys of childhood's unquestioning belief. Doubt in her mind was only terrible sin, for which she suffered deep remorse. She associated solely with those who were firm believers, and carefully only read those books that would tend to intensify her own faith. Feeling that she was inclined to be more liberal and broad-minded than those around her, and fearing that this was only the thin end of the wedge of infidelity craftily insinuated by the Evil One, she forced and developed quite a second nature of narrowness and exaction. Being of a highly nervous and sensitive temperament, she was in consequence often inclined to be impatient and irritable, and for this, too, she suffered keen remorse. Helen Senior was essentially idealistic, and, though gifted with a marked strength of character, she came so far short of her high conceptions of a noble woman, that it made her feel lowly and humble, and endure agonies of despair. Through thinking little of herself, she frequently made the mistake of thinking too much of others. Some of her friends were wondrous beings in her eyes. Her brother Jack was to her a truly noble, manly fellow, generous to a fault, not possessing a single selfish impulse. That he was imbued with a sufficient sense of the importance of the all-saving love of the Saviour, she was not quite sure, and the uncertainty gave her great pain. He scrupulously abstained from mentioning any of his heterodox ideas before her. The wish to avoid hurting her feelings prevented him from seeking the pleasure—which so many who hold them find—of airing his advanced views.

There was a great resemblance between the brother and sister in nature. The opposite grooves each had entered upon had made the difference. Like him, she possessed a strong will, and a certain amount of that quality which Mr. Stewart, discovering in Senior, called "devil," a quality which sometimes blazed out in apparently prominent inconsistency with the general meekness of her disposition.

In looks, especially in the expression, there was also

a likeness between them, only he was plain and she exceedingly pretty.

Love the woman had once known, and what a depth of love it was! In the deepest recesses of her heart was the image of a young naval lieutenant, who had perished in the foundering of a storm-tossed ship. This had happened seven years before, when she was but nineteen, but the sweet sorrow that now remained only increased her natural gentleness, her sympathy for others. It made her tread more firmly than ever the paths of the faith that told her that ere long she would once more behold him whom she had so loved, and with him "sit at endless feast enjoying each the other's good."

Henry Senior, the clergyman, had thought it advisable, and insisted, meek as he was, that not a word should be mentioned to her about the M. E. Smirker mystery. Now she was going to receive a shock. When they got to Russell Square they crossed over to the pavement next the gardens and walked round and round.

Senior at length broke the silence, and Helen listened in a state of great excitement. Many a man in his place would have had neither difficulty nor compunction in inventing some plausible tale to account for the absence of the marriage certificate, a tale that would in no way have offended the susceptibilities and prejudices of his sister. But Senior was not an accomplished liar. He required facts upon which to build his fiction. And, strange to say, he had a sense that the nearer he could stick to a semblance of the truth, the less would be the falsehood, and consequently the less culpable he would appear in his own mind. The dim fear that his sister might possibly in the future hear more of the facts of the case influenced him a little also, it may be.

He now said that Cheeky had been forced by her step-mother, who lived in Cape Town, and habitually ill-treated her, to accept a situation as barmaid in a place at Kimberley. He had met her there, and being attracted by her looks and modest bearing, he had entered into conversation with her, and she had told him her history. Her father had lately died. She loathed her life as barmaid, and prayed him for his help in getting a more suitable situation. He promised, and he tried, without success. The more he saw of the girl the more he

liked and pitied her. At last he fell in love, and it was only his snobbish prejudice that kept him from asking her to marry him. He could see, too, that his love was returned.

It was not long, however, before the girl's high spirit was the means of bringing to a sudden close the new and distasteful life she had entered upon. One night an old debauched scoundrel, a Mr. Maeker, a diamond merchant, tried to kiss her, being encouraged to do it by the proprietress of the bar, a Mrs. Getit, one of the vilest women on the Fields. Cheeky begged the man to desist. He would not. In desperation she picked up a soda-water bottle and struck him a fearful blow on the face, inflicting a deep wound. Then she took a solemn oath before all the people assembled that she would never enter a bar again as long as she lived. The poor friendless girl walked out of the place. She tried in vain to get a lodging for the night, but every place was closed. She made up her mind to walk about the streets till the morning, but some drunken blackguards, seeing her unaccompanied, insulted her. Frightened for her life, she fled and came to seek his protection. His room was facing the street, and the front door happening to be open, she came and knocked at it. When he found who was there he dressed and came out. She told him what had happened. He then got her admittance for the night into some boarding-house. In an evil moment, however, carried away by the passion of his love, he had proposed that she should get married to him by special licence in the morning. After a great deal of entreaty on his part, most unwillingly she consented.

Next morning accordingly they went to get married, but she being so young, they refused to grant the licence without the mother's consent. He at once wrote to the step-mother, who in reply sent him a most indignant letter, threatening to have him arrested for abduction and all manner of things, and insisting on the step-daughter going back to Mrs. Getit's service—she having declared her willingness to take her back on promise of better behaviour in the future. The step-mother received nearly all the girl's salary, and she cared more for the few pounds than that her step-daughter should be made an honourable woman in the eyes of the world. Then he made a terrible

mistake: he persuaded the girl to pass herself off as his wife until they succeeded in gaining the mother's consent.

This was the only way he could see of shielding her in such a den of iniquity as the Diamond Fields. But shortly after this came the news of Mr. Cumming's death and the legacy left them all. He then took the girl down to Cape Town, hoping by personal interview, and by being able to show proof of his better circumstances, to persuade the obdurate step-mother to give way. But on their arrival at Cape Town they found that this woman had only recently married again, and with her husband had sailed for Australia. He ascertained on inquiry that a definite period would have to elapse from the time of the step-mother's departure before he could marry the girl. Leaving her with a respectable family he had long known in Cape Town, he had come home to see about his share of what Mr. Cumming had left them, intending to return as soon as possible and get married. Soon after his arrival in England, however, as she knew, he fell ill, and the girl, hearing of it, came home at once, all by herself, too, to nurse him. She telegraphed her arrival to his brother Henry. Senior said he had at once started for London, met her at the station, and got married by special licence. Now he thought, under the circumstances, it would be better for all concerned if she, Helen, did not know the date of their marriage, because, not knowing it, she would not be able to tell if asked. Having passed as man and wife in South Africa, if it were to come out now that they had only recently been wedded it would reflect greatly upon his wife; for himself he did not much care.

Helen Senior was silent. She experienced a numbed feeling of pain deep down in her heart. It would not be for some time, she instinctively felt, that she would feel the full pangs of the anguish that Jack's confession must bring upon her. She felt dimly conscious, too, of a sore feeling of disappointment that her sister-in-law was not a lady by birth; with all her charitableness, class-prejudice was strong. Mechanically she turned her steps in the direction of the house in Bedford Square, walking along in a half-dazed state, her brother by her side. He saw the pained look on her face, and felt for her in this silent

suffering. He asked himself how would it have been had he told her the whole truth?

"Helen," he said, "please don't say anything to her about it, it would only hurt her feelings and do no good." She did not answer, but he felt satisfied she would not.

Cheeky, poor thing, sitting by herself all alone in the big front room, was undergoing a most trying ordeal. She was enduring the same sort of suspense a man would if being tried for his life, and hearing all the evidence going against him. Jack had taken his sister out to tell her everything; how they were not even married yet, and how she was only a low girl who had served in a bar, and coming into his room had forced herself upon him in the middle of the night. What would she think?

At last she heard them ascend the stairs; she trembled, and was like to faint from excitement.

The door opened, and she saw Helen Senior's beautiful face, pale and grief-stricken, like that of a mother who has just received news of a little one being killed. She dimly saw Jack behind his sister shaking his head, and holding his finger to his lips as if to enjoin caution as to what she said. Then she felt herself clasped in Helen's loving embrace, heard the words, "Oh, my poor darling sister!" spoken with such sad, sweet cadence that she could no longer restrain her feelings, but, bursting in tears, threw her arms around the other's neck, as would a penitent little child to a parent, and gasped between her sobs,

"Oh! please don't look down upon me, I really did not know that I was doing wrong! But it is all my fault, and Jack has been so good. Oh, please, I want to be a good woman just like you."

The grief of the child who had been so wronged by her brother, and who so bravely wanted to take all blame upon herself, melted the ice that was binding the flood-gates of Helen's overcharged heart. Placing her cheek lovingly against the sobbing girl's, her tears poured forth in relieving streams and mingled with the other's.

Senior looked on, touched with the grief he saw before him, but uppermost in his mind was the dread that Cheeky would confess the whole truth.

Suddenly she broke out into hysterical screams, and her body and limbs were seized with convulsive movements.

In vain Helen tried to soothe her. Another attack of nervous exhaustion had set in.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DR. BUCKIT was summoned again.

After examining the patient he called Helen, with whom he seemed much impressed, to one side, and gave her his views of the case.

She afterwards told her brother what the doctor had said: that in the first place he thought the patient should be taken into the country before she got any worse. "And, Jack," she went on, "Dr. Buckit is also of opinion that Eliza is much too young to have been married, and he advises her separation from you for six months if it can be managed. Great care will have to be taken, he adds, or else her nervousness will become chronic, and might also affect her brain. I don't know how the child will take it, but for her own sake, Jack dear, you must impress upon her the importance of following out the doctor's instructions; but you must use tact. I am now going to write to Henry and Mira, telling them I have found you, and that you have a sweet young wife, who is, however, far from strong, and the doctor has ordered her into the country, and I am taking the liberty, as she must lose no time, of bringing her down at once to Eightstone to stay with them for a time. I shall explain, too, all that he has said about the advisability of separation." Her voice trembled as she continued, "And I shall have to tell them that your marriage was preceded by an elopement, Eliza's mother would not consent, and that all this has been preying upon the poor girl's mind and made her ill. I think, dear, I can say that with perfect truth?"

Poor Helen was anxious to make full peace with her conscience for this act of diplomacy she proposed to pursue.

"Yes," Senior replied with a crimson face, "I am quite sure you can."

"And," went on Helen, "on that account I shall ask them particularly not to refer to the marriage."

Senior was sorry indeed to part with Cheeky, and looked forward to a blank six months without her. It was something, however, to be relieved of the immediate dread of being severely cross-examined by his inquisitive sister-in-law. But he experienced a sense of fear; he felt as if it were a great wrong to let this girl go down to his brother's family and be introduced to their friends as his wife, though he saw no alternative. When he told the girl that the doctor considered their separation necessary for a short time, that Helen was going to take her down to his brother's place at Eightstone, and that he would remain in London, there were no floods of tears, no protestations; she seemed perfectly acquiescent. Senior was a little piqued. He took the precaution of informing her of what he had said to his sister about their supposed marriage. He was forced to pursue the course he adopted, as Helen's thoughts and ideas on matters of that kind, owing to the very narrow way she had been brought up, were such that the whole truth would have been too great a shock to her. But she would refrain from asking her any questions, and with her thoughtful tact she had, in writing to Henry, put things in such a way that no suspicion should be raised in their minds, and they, too, would ask no questions. He was very sorry that, owing to her illness coming on again and Helen so inopportunely turning up, they would have to postpone their wedding, but on the first opportunity they would get married, and, when she was all right, return to South Africa.

Henry Senior was somewhat reassured by his sister's letters, as he had been led, by the pessimistic view his wife had insisted on taking, to think that his brother must either have got himself terribly entangled with or married some most obnoxious woman.

Mira, however, upon reading the letter, triumphantly exclaimed, "I knew it! Did I not say so? Now, Henry, if she is not a lady, and a proper person for your wife to associate with, I hope you will have sufficient respect for me and strength of mind to do your duty and to tell Helen to take her elsewhere, or I shall not stay under the same roof. Oh! I know what Helen is; if Jack had married a chimney-sweep's daughter she would in her eyes be quite

charming. I do believe, Henry, that your brother is the most selfish man in the world. I think he has behaved scandalously."

But she was quite in a feverish state of anxiety the whole of the morning to see the so-called "sweet young wife" of her brother-in-law, and to realise the worst of this new connection.

Helen and Cheeky arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon. Henry was at the station with a pony-chaise to meet them. When they stepped down on the platform he first shook hands with and kissed Helen, and then turning to the young girl, he said with a bright smile of welcome, "And is this my new sister?" He kissed her too. The girl's heart was won.

When they arrived at the vicarage Mira kissed Helen, but shook hands rather coldly with Cheeky, who felt awed at such treatment.

After they had taken their things off and sat down to lunch, the young girl felt that Mrs. Senior all the time was carefully taking her measure, making her feel, in her nervous state, most guilty and uncomfortable.

Mira was really doing her best to sum up her new sister-in-law. "Was she a lady?" she wondered. With all her discrimination she could not tell. The girl spoke with a pure soft accent and perfect correctness; her movements, in spite of her nervousness, were graceful, yet there was a something about her so different from other girls of Mira's own class—perhaps it was some colonial peculiarity, she could not determine; but one thing she could not help owning to herself—that her new sister-in-law was much better than she had anticipated.

Helen Senior was the only woman with whom Henry's wife had ever come in contact who produced in her the uncomfortable feeling of inferiority. There was a vigorous though quiet force of character in this woman that impressed everyone around her, and one that weaker natures could not help acknowledging. Mira could not decide in her own mind whether or not she liked her. This feeling of the other's superiority and an inner consciousness that Helen did not think so well of her as she would like—and she set great value on the good opinion of others—produced in her sometimes a feeling of bitterness towards her sister-in-law. Then the

other was humble, was continually confessing her own faults, so that envy was almost impossible; and it was so plainly to be seen that she was actuated by the highest motives that Mira was forced into a genuine feeling of respect not wholly free from fear. When she was with them, so far as appearances went Mira visibly improved. To her husband she was more thoughtful, and she assisted their guest with her work amongst the poor.

Now she would have given much indeed to have found out Cheeky's antecedents and all about the elopement and marriage, but she knew she dare not ask the girl, on account of Helen, a single question. There was a mystery somewhere, she felt certain, which they did not wish her to penetrate.

It was not long, under the tender care and skilful nursing of Helen, the change and the sweet pure country air, before Cheeky recovered her health and much of her naturally bright spirits. But a certain heaviness of heart never left her; no matter what she was doing or how interested she became in anything, she was always conscious of the fact that she was nothing but an impostor, liable to be expelled at any moment ignominiously from Henry Senior's house.

Helen soon recognised the great natural good within her, and learnt to understand, in a great measure, the subtleties of her character, and the impressionable mind so easily influenced for good. The fact of her not being a lady by birth grew less and less important in her eyes, it was so evident she was one by nature. With great zest, seeing what fine material she had to work upon, she set forth to mould the girl's character. She tried, and with marked success, to imbue her with her own grand ideals. She found in her a sweet companion, who had much in common with herself, the youthful freshness of mind, and its aspiring eagerness towards the new heights it sought to soar in, serving greatly to stimulate her own ambitions.

Helen, like Jack, possessed a strong republican spirit, which, however, was always duly subservient to her religion. In matters of dress, diet, her ideas on education and women's suffrage, and many other things, she was considered by her friends eccentric. She naturally tried to convert the young girl to her own common sense views

on such matters, and Cheeky, her preconception of Helen by nearer acquaintance only strengthened, accepted everything with perfect faith.

They read together. The novels Cheeky now studied were not of the vapid, sentimental kind Violet used to get her pupil to read, but those that would naturally recommend themselves to a woman of Helen's strong sense.

The latter was an excellent pianist, and though her voice was not anything extraordinary, she had had some of the best masters, and, being greatly struck by the girl's sweet mezzo-soprano, she gave her the benefit of the instruction she had received herself. At Cheeky's request, too, the young girl continued her other studies, but Helen would only allow her to do this for two hours a day. She was not yet strong enough, she said, for more.

She got her to learn only a little daily, but to learn it very thoroughly, so that it should not easily escape her memory. Among many other things Helen gave her lessons in scientific dressmaking. "It was positively a sin," she said, "the ignorance of some women in the everyday requirements of life. Too much attention was given altogether to a superficial knowledge of what was often useless!"

Together they made almost daily visits to some of the poor and suffering in the village. To these they did not read dry religious tracts, or books that had the special object in view of frightening the unfortunate reader into a frenzied state about the welfare of his soul, but books instructive and amusing, according to the taste of the person entertained.

They themselves made various nourishing dishes for the needy and ailing, and Helen, full of cookery-book theories, was greatly helped by her young friend's practical knowledge. It is not to be denied that some portion of the great pleasure Cheeky derived from these philanthropic visits was gained from the almost servile respect paid her by the peasants, and from the evident and most pleasing fact that not a doubt crossed their minds as to her being a lady born and bred.

Helen, like most English country girls, very fond of exercise, initiated Cheeky into the science and rules of lawn tennis, at which, too, the athletic pupil soon became an adept.

The Rev. Henry Senior had a weakness for horses, so that Cheeky and Helen, attended by the red-haired stable boy, could indulge in long rides amidst the sweet pastoral landscapes of the hop-growing county. Mira was surprised when she saw how well the girl could ride. "I wonder who she can be!" she mentally ejaculated. "She is lacking in a great many accomplishments, she cannot play a single note, and does not understand one word of French, but she rides splendidly. I expect her father is some big squatter up-country, far away from schools and that sort of thing. Had she been the daughter of a poor tradesman there would have been no need for Jack to have eloped with her."

Cheeky's beauty, her sweet voice, more admired than Mira's, Helen's high opinion and love of her, and her general popularity, would, no doubt, have caused Mira to dislike her, had it not been for one thing that helped in a great measure to neutralise her jealousy; this was the visitor's wonderful liking for little Aubrey, a liking inspired by his resemblance to her lover. And this affection was returned—no lady was like his new aunt. She romped with him just like a companion of his own age.

Wherever the girl went she was well received. The married women made a pet of her. The quiet well-bred English girls at first chilled her with their reserve, which she discovered to be simply shyness; she soon grew to be at ease with them, and they impressed her more favourably than did the too "knowing" girls on board the "Cicero."

Henry Senior was greatly drawn to his "new sister," as he called her. What a splendid clergyman's wife she would have made! he thought.

A strong overpowering affection grew up between Helen and this child of the people. So intertwining and binding was their love, that, no matter what might happen in the future, a severance would be impossible.

Cheeky often yearned for the sweet rest of a clear conscience to tell Helen the whole of her past—to hide nothing. She was confident that, in spite of all its hideousness, she would lose nothing of the other's love; but then she must never be disloyal to her lover by disclosing more than he had thought fit to tell.

Endowed with an emotional temperament that would naturally tend in the direction of a supernatural religion

like the Christian, she found in it now a haven of sweet restfulness.

She used to long for the Sunday to come round. In the quaint little Gothic church, nestling in ivy and under huge wide-spreading elm-trees, she would sit entranced, as Henry spoke simple words of Christian instruction, sit with eyes closed to shut out everything earthly, her face radiant, feeling, as it were, Christ's endearing presence. The treble voices of the choir-boys in their white surplices, and the pealing of the organ, would suffuse her with a soft dreamy feeling, as if under the influence of some narcotic productive of the most delicious sensations. And there was an intense pathos added to her own sweet voice as she raised it in joyous praise, that showed it came free and unrestrained from the depths of her soul.

After church she was frequently troubled with a nervous attack more or less severe. Helen, noticing this, became anxious, and suggested the advisability of not attending service until she was completely free from the nervousness; but Cheeky entreated to be allowed to go every Sunday morning and evening; she felt sure, she said, if she discontinued doing so she would only get worse from the unhappiness her absence would cause her. "Besides," she added, "surely Jesus would not let me suffer because I love to praise Him."

This argument was unanswerable, Helen felt.

The religious fervour, heightened by the reaction from the emotion caused by all the sin, sadness, and misery she had seen in London, encouraged by the example and sweet sympathy of her ideal sister and augmented by her remorse for the past, produced in the girl the yearning for a holy life. She was always talking to Helen of Jack. But her love was undergoing a change. It had not lessened. It had become intensified, but at the same time etherealised. She was becoming dimly conscious of a feeling growing within her antagonistic to her ever living with him again, married or unmarried. That part of her past which she had spent with him she looked back upon as a time of great sin, which she must expiate by a life of absolute chastity, living only for others, in nothing for herself.

Three months after her arrival at Eightstone, Jack,

who corresponded regularly three times a week, wrote to Helen, saying that he had suddenly decided to return to South Africa and try to get some billet on the Diamond Fields. If successful he would take a house, furnish it, and get everything ready for Cheeky's return. They had not enough to live upon without his working, and his ready cash was nearly all exhausted. He was feeling so miserable all by himself in London that he really "could not stick it" for another three months. Sooner or later he should have to go back, and now that he was forced to separate from his wife it would be just as well to be abroad out of the way. Helen was loth to let the girl return to the place where she had known only sin and shame, but she knew that her brother could get nothing suitable to do in England. Ah! she thought, she knew well what was causing him this miserable unrest. No doubt he was suffering most acutely from a wounded conscience, and in sympathy she suffered more than he did.

Cheeky offered no objection to Jack's returning without her, and, as the steamer he was going by sailed in three days' time, it was arranged that he should spend the last two days at his disposal at Eightstone. Helen took the precaution of hinting to Mira that it would be as well if she refrained from mentioning or asking him anything about his marriage. This had the effect of raising the clergyman's wife's curiosity to a painful pitch, and gave to her fertile imagination new scope.

As there was no room for him at the small vicarage, it was further arranged that he was to stay with the Blairs, a county family with whom the Seniors were on terms of close intimacy.

When Senior came he was struck with the marked change he saw in Cheeky. She looked perfectly well and strong, but in her face he noticed a far-off look, and in her whole manner and bearing a something that was not there before. He was grievously conscious, too, of a lack of the old harmony of companionship that had existed between them. He thought it might be born of a guilty self-consciousness caused by her being reminded by his presence of the disagreeable fact that she was staying at the vicarage under false pretences. He could well understand this feeling, as he had noticed by her letters that a

change was taking place in her mind and ideas. A change, too, he liked to see. She was evidently imbibing the prejudices of the girls of the better classes and getting as religious as Helen herself. Now, though he affected to despise those prejudices, and condemn that religion, he was conscious that he would like his future wife to possess both. She was no lady by birth, but he was anxious that she should resemble the type as closely as possible, prejudices, faults, and all. Religion, too, was most probably a good thing for women to have, he thought.

Cheeky was filled with conflicting emotions. She was truly glad to see Jack again, but—and he was partly right in his surmise—his presence brought the past before her with painful vividness, and also forced a new conviction that created a soreness in her heart, which had lately been trying to insinuate itself into her mind, that Jack was not the perfect being she had thought him.

When he started back to London *en route* for South Africa, Helen, Henry, and Cheeky went to see him off at the Eightstone Station.

Senior, after shaking hands with and kissing Helen and Cheeky, got into his carriage. Cheeky, at this moment of his departure, felt inexpressibly sad—her heart was full; all the remembrance of his love and kindness was present in her mind, yet she felt that it was going to be a good-bye for ever! Obeying an impulse, as she stood close to the railway carriage, she held out her hand to him anew. "Jack," she said, and her voice quivered—"Jack, good-bye. Always remember this, dearest, no matter what may happen—remember this, that I love you more than anything in this world. I shall always pray for you morning and night. Kiss me, dearest." He leant over the carriage door, and she put both her arms round his neck and kissed him softly on the cheek. The whistle blew, and the train started. Senior, his head out of the window, saw the last of her waving her handkerchief, then he sank into his seat, the words, and the gentle pathos with which they were spoken, still in his ears. "Always remember this, dearest, no matter what may happen—remember this, that I love you more than anything in this world. I shall always pray for you morning and night." And again he felt her kiss upon his cheek; but the kiss was like a sister's, and a sad presentiment crept over him,

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SENIOR had found it lonely living in London by himself after he had become used to the bright and sympathetic companionship of Cheeky. And he was harassed, too, and in a continual state of suspense, at the thought of the consequences of its being found out that he was not married to her. What would the kind-hearted Henry think if he knew, with his narrow views? And Mira, what on earth would she not say? And the ever-loving gentle Helen, what an incurable wound would be inflicted on her too sensitive heart, and to what a depth would he not sink in her esteem!

If only she had come after they were married, everything would have been right, and his conscience at rest. For the girl's sake his sister would carefully see that she was asked no questions relating to her marriage. Cheeky, too, he could depend upon as long as she kept well, but he had a great fear lest this nervousness might unhinge her mind, and make her disclose everything.

To pass the time away, and also from the interest he took in that branch of athletics, he went in for boxing. And if a man is fretting, what takes him out of himself, or makes him forget worry more quickly than a good bout with the gloves? He went to Professor Dan Slogman in Golden Square, the retired middle-weight champion of England, and arranged with that pugilist to pay him five shillings a spar. He did not, he told Slogman, want lessons, he had already learnt boxing, he only wanted the exercise. Poor Dan Slogman, who was a little beyond his prime as an athlete, found that this strong young fellow was "very dear at the price," as he himself expressed it. So he told Senior that the best thing he could do was for him to box as many different men as he could, and so gain experience of various styles. He might procure other professionals, youngsters, and Senior might pay him for his trouble, the use of his room, and the hints he would give him, from time to time, after his encounters, as to where he had made mistakes. Many were the exciting bouts Senior had, and so well did he acquit himself, that on one occasion after he had got considerably the best of a promising professional middle-weight, Dan Slogman said to

him, in a tone of great earnestness and admiration, "Look 'ere, Mr. Senior, if you was to fight the best man in England 'arf a stone 'eavier than yourself, you would carry my pieces, every cent on 'em." And the worthy professor commenced to build castles in the air, as to how he would surprise his brother-teachers—amongst the professional fraternity there existed great rivalry—with this dark horse at the forthcoming amateur boxing competition, and great was his disappointment when Senior told him that he would not enter into any amateur contest, not being qualified on account of his having given lessons in Cape Town once when he was hard up. In vain Slogman tried to impress on him that, "They'll never know nought about it, if ye keeps your mouth shut."

But three months after Helen and Cheeky had gone down to Eightstone, Senior, as we have already seen, had written to his sister that he "could stick it no longer," and so he decided to return to South Africa at once.

It was with a sentiment akin to gladness that he once again set eyes on the lofty Table Mountain, rising like a huge wall of shelter over the city of Cape Town.

The light-coloured flat-roofed Dutch houses; the dry, sandy-looking streets and roads; the Malays, with tufts on their chins and Turkish fezzes on their heads; their women with their gaudy-coloured waistless dresses, commencing from close beneath the arms to spread out in huge crinoline shape; all the different shades of colour, from the Kaffir to some of the delicate brunette Cape girls; the fish-carts running along as the vendor disturbed the otherwise peaceful air by shrill blasts from a long, thin trumpet, to give the good housewives timely warning that there was at hand a supply of hotten-tots, silver-fish, snoek, and other kinds of Cape fish; the long row of white-roofed hansom cabs, stretching in a line almost the whole length of Adderley Street; the easy-going Cape Colonist dressed in absurd imitation of English style, with no regard to climatic requirements, taking his leisure as he walked along, and stopping every now and again to gossip or have a drink with an acquaintance, so different from the perpetual bustle of the Londoner, who has to earn his livelihood amidst greater competition; each brought its association to the young man,

He thought of the time when he had arrived there from Basutoland nearly four years before, when he was so dejected, not knowing where to turn or what to do to make a living, until by chance he hit on the idea of giving lessons in boxing. How different now with £250 a year and a billet in Kimberley almost sure!

The deep blue African sky was again welcome to him, and, like a powerful stimulant, seemed to fill his whole being with brightness and hope. The vague presentiment caused by Cheeky's words when she bade him farewell at the Eightstone Station, which had ever been present with him since he left her, now seemed to grow less and less distinct, even as did the bank of white clouds which he saw rising from the "Devil's Peak" and dispersing, under the power of the rising morning sun, in thin vapoury forms, gradually vanishing into the clear blue canopy of heaven. He was well known in Cape Town, and owing to his boxing fame, and unassuming disposition, was also well liked. The continual shaking of hands, and the many almost inquisitive inquiries as to what he had been doing of late, and what sort of time he had in England, made him feel as if he had arrived home instead of having just left it. Every man who has lived any length of time in the colonies, experiences pleasure when returning after an absence of some duration. There is a certain feeling of brotherhood, a free-and-easy homeliness, which is peculiar to the colonies, and which one misses in the old country.

Senior did not forget to call on Mrs. Travers; she was still in the old place in Loop Street. She was as hard-up and as cheerful as ever. His old landlady and the children anxiously asked after Miss Smirker, that young lady being held high in their esteem. Maller, too, Senior came across, and beyond the expression of his face being a little more imbecile, there was but little perceptible change in this ex-irregular officer. He was still managing to exist on his £10 a month in the same old way.

A couple of days later Senior took train to Kimberley, for the railway now extended the whole way. He contrasted the twenty-four hours by rail and the six days' coach-journey, when first he went to Kimberley, with the present thirty-odd hours in a train fitted with commodious saloons,

in which were procurable good beds, good meals, and comfort generally.

It was about midday when he arrived at his destination. The heaps of *débris* (i.e., the tailings) which generated the light-grey dust that rose in clouds upon the slightest breeze; the washing and hauling machinery dotted here and there; the low iron dwellings and shanties, with now and then a few stumpy trees, that struggled for existence in the barren soil; the intense dry heat and the blinding glare of the sun, too well reflected by this city of iron and its barren parched surroundings, forcibly reminded him that he was in Kimberley once more. Once more he put up at the Central Hotel. He went to see Leonard, who was much pleased to meet him again. They had a long chat, and Senior, glad to take somebody into his confidence, told his friend everything that had happened in connection with Cheeky and himself. Leonard would not know her now, he said; and he laid great stress on how well she had been received, and how much she was thought of and appreciated by English ladies. Leonard felt tempted to call the other's attention to what he had always predicted, but he refrained, and, as Jack Senior had evidently made up his mind to marry the girl—he could not do otherwise after introducing her to his people as already his wife—he decided to say nothing against the contemplated marriage; it would be, he felt, speaking slightly of his friend's future wife.

Mr. Stewart was the next one Senior searched for. He found the old Scotchman in the bar of the Queen's Hotel. He was greatly pleased to see Senior, and after pressing him to have a drink, he called a cab and drove him off to his rooms, which were in a row of bachelors' dwellings, built of iron, in Du Toits Pan Road, a row he had put up himself as an investment, being a great believer in landed property.

"Come inside, man," he said, when they had arrived at his place. "I am real glad to see you, and you are looking fine and a regular toff, I'm telling you, with your swell London-made clothes."

The sitting-room which they entered was substantially and well furnished. On the floor was a rich soft Turkey carpet and some tiger and jackal skins; the chairs, mostly easy ones, like the big comfortable couch,

were covered with dark brown morocco. In the centre was a large mahogany table, with a handsome cloth, on which were writing materials, albums, photographs in silver filigree frames, and three volumes of a work entitled "*Pugilistica*," having two men in old-fashioned fighting attitude on the covers. Round the walls were some assegais and other implements of native warfare, several pictures of Scotch landscapes, sporting prints, and the portraits of several noted modern pugilists. In one corner was a bookshelf which contained, Senior observed, books on metals and mining, books on philosophy and freethought, and a few well-bound novels by standard authors.

Mr. Stewart forced upon Senior "Just anither wee drap whusky on this auspicious occasion." "And what do you think of my room?" he inquired; "I took some pains in furnishing; I like to be comfortable."

"Very nice indeed."

"And did you see any good boxing at home? and did you have a bit turn yourself?" Senior gave the Scotchman a modest account of his success with the gloves in London, and informed him of Dan Slogman's encomiums.

"I knew it, I knew it all along," broke in Mr. Stewart. "Look here, though you have not fought in the ring, I would back you against anything in the world, your weight; you are a phenomenon, a natural phenomenon, that is just what you are, d'ye see."

Senior laughed, feeling greatly pleased at the other's high opinion of his capabilities. He then asked if there was any chance of a billet—that was why he had come back. Mr. Stewart said that he was still manager at Swab's Gully, and if the other really wanted a "shop" he would soon find him one. Senior said that was just what he did want.

"Man, but I thought, don't ye understond, that you had come into some money."

"So I did, £250 a year, and a few hundred pounds besides."

"Well, that's no bad, a nice tidy bit sum, always enough to keep you independent," said Mr. Stewart, his respect for his young friend rising.

"Yes, but hardly enough to retire upon for good, I want

to be worth a little more than that," Senior returned. Mr. Stewart then gave him all the news—how most of the companies still in existence were now paying well; that "Centrals," "De Beers," and the French Company shares had all gone up during his absence; how keeping the niggers in compounds at the mines, and never letting them out until their time of service was up, was doing some harm to the shopkeepers, but at the same time was undoubtedly checking the I.D.B.s, as one could plainly see by the little money that was now spent by them in gambling. For instance, the "Red Light," the "Scarlet Bar," and "Carme's" did hardly anything now, whereas before they used to coin money; why, sometimes they scarcely took in a month what they had previously taken in a couple of nights! He told Senior about the great strike that had lately taken place, through the refusal of the white workmen to be searched when coming out of the mines. In Mr. Stewart's opinion there were a great many diamonds stolen by the whites, and the guilty ones, for their own ends, had most likely stirred up the others to "kick" against the searching system. And then he described the great anxiety and excitement which took place when five of the men on strike were shot by the Kimberley police while trying to put out the fires in the French Company's engine houses, and how detachments of Cape Mounted Riflemen and Cape Infantry had been sent up to keep the peace. The shooting, in his opinion, had put a stop to the whole thing, for shortly afterwards the men had returned to work.

"Of course you heard about the big fight we had here?" Mr. Stewart asked.

Senior had not heard.

"Well I must tell you, very funny." Here Mr. Stewart struck his knees with both hands, and shook his head and laughed heartily as he repeated the words "very funny." After his merriment had subsided he went on, "You see, I got a letter from a chap named Goodman—keeps an hotel in Cape Town. I knew him when he was a digger in Jagersfontein. In this letter he told me that a big fighting man had just arrived from America, Jim Donnell by name, the champion of California, and he wanted to know if I could do anything with him up here, and let him, Goodman, you know, stand in a bit if I got anything on.

Well, I knew this man Donnell by name, he had fought and beat, don't ye understand, some good men; in fact he was reckoned a very good man in the States; but, thinks I, this might be an impostor going by the pugilist's name, so I writes down to Goodman and asks him if he is sure it is the man. He writes back again that he is positive, and encloses me the man's photograph, and a portrait cut out of the *New York Police Gazette*, with several slips from newspapers containing accounts of sets-to and fights he had had. Then I wires down twenty quid to pay Donnell's passage and expenses up here, and I says in my telegram, 'Let him leave first mail train; impress upon him must keep his mouth shut, or will not be able get anything on.' Well, in due time up he comes. I likes the look of him. Man! a fine-built, clean-looking young fellow, weight about 12 stone 7 lbs. in condition, standing about six feet. A good face, broad jaw, thick neck, and a nice eye, lots of devil in it, and fine sloping shoulders. I like, do you see, sloping shoulders in a fighter. This young fellow reminded me something of Tom King. And he seemed very humble and nice-spoken; he had not a cent to bless himself with, you see. Well, I got Dooley to give him a trial. My orders to Donnell were not to knock Dooley about, just to bang him a bit about the chest now and again, to show me his cleverness, and to let the other get on to him a good 'thick un' now and again, just to encourage him, and not to spoil things by giving himself away too much.

"Well, he carried out my orders first-class, man, and I could see he was no impostor—very clever, if I am telling you, and a great deal too good for anything out here. I gets a-hold of Faganstine, a dom sweep, yon fellow, but I thought he would be useful to do some little fly work for me, don't ye understand. So I tells him the whole business—that I have got a man who can eat Joe the Brum, that I want him just to give me a hand to get on a match, and that, if my man Donnell wins, he can have the whole of the gate-money, and what he can make in bets. I cautioned him to be most careful and keep everything to himself for his own sake and mine. Now in the first place I made him challenge Dooley, or any man in South Africa, bar, mind ye, Joe the Brum, for £500 a side. Oh, and Dooley, you know, was quite willing to fight him,

Donnell had kidded him so well, but he couldn't get the backing—you know the worst judge of a fighter is a fighting-man; I have always seen it so. I made Donnell change his name to Jansen, and got him to make out that he was a Swede, a sailor, who had settled down in some part of America, because, you understand, he spoke with a Yankee accent.

"Now I goes down to Joe the Brum; you know he keeps a bar near the gaol yonder. Well, I kids to him a treat, and at my instigation he puts a challenge in the paper to knock out any man in the country inside twelve three-minute rounds. I wrote the challenge for him myself. Then I got Faganstine to put in the *Independent* that he would back Jansen to fight him to a finish, if Joe would lay the odds, two to one. Up comes Joe to ask my advice on the matter. I tells him, do you see, to offer five to three on himself, £500 to £300, to fight Jansen, prize-ring rules. 'Joe,' says I, 'get your backers to find you the £300 and I'll give you a cheque for the balance, £200.' Well, he goes away, and when people hear that I have gone in Joe's stakes a couple of centuries, they think it is good enough, and he has not the least trouble in getting up his money. Anyway, a match was made between them, £500 to £300, to come off in six weeks from signing articles. I did not care much what they fought for, I was sure in any case to get back my two hundred pounds whichever way it went, and I got Faganstine to raise Jansen's stakes, the £300, and a nice penny he made for himself. I believe he collected altogether something like £500, and he kept, of course, the odd £200 to himself. What I was after was the outside betting, and the sport of the thing, don't ye understand. Everything went swimmingly, man. I had Donnell sent out to the 'Bend' to train, and I employed Turner, the sprinter—a nice, quiet, honest lad, too—to give him a hand in his training. I got a-hold of wee Willie Mackie, the storekeeper, a wide-awake canny Scot, who could keep his tongue within his teeth, and would not go cackling all over the place for the sake of making himself important. I got him just to go round and pick up every farthing he could—first to take the odds, then evens, then to lay the odds on, and, I tell you, I soon got a nice little bit of money on. I backed Joe the Brum several times in public, you under-

stond, in bars where there was a crowd in, just to keep things dark. Now, just a couple of weeks before the fight, Elias Eliason comes to me, and after a lot of beating about the bush, first pretending he wants to back Donnell, I find out he wishes to bet on Joe the Brum. I was going to pretend that I also wanted to lay on the same man, but he opened his mouth so wide that it was worth my while to snap him up. Yes, sir, a level £1,000 he offered to bet me that Joe the Brum would win. I takes him up right on the spot, ye understand, and books the bet. 'Another one, if you like,' says he. 'No,' says I, 'but I'll take the odds, and after a wee bit bantering he lays me £600 to £400. Now I thinks it strange. You know what a wide-awake man Eliason is—won't lay out a penny unless he thinks it about ten to one in his favour. Then some more of his following comes to me, and after a bit haggling they all seemed willing to lay the odds. I booked a few bets, but I commenced to feel a wee bit uncomfortable, do you see? Turner, his trainer, came in just about the same time for some money. I asks him how Jansen was getting on. He tells me that he seems to have got a bit lazy the last few days; at first he had trained very conscientiously, but of late he did not seem a bit inclined for his work. All at once I smells a 'mouse.' What a wonder." (Here Mr. Stewart jumped up and knitted his brows, and assumed a very knowing air.) "I writes down in my pocket-book £1,000 to nothing to Jim Donnell alias Jansen the Swede, that he does not beat Joe the Brum. I then takes a cart, and goes out to see Jim Donnell. I talks nicely with him—never lets on that I thought anything. Oh, no, what do you think! I got him to come back to the camp with me. I wanted to settle about the gate-money, to get him to sign his share over to Faganstine, which he had agreed to do, I told him. Well, I gets him into this room, you understand, and he takes a chair on the other side of the table. I am sitting where I am now." (Mr. Stewart again sat down.) "Oh, ay! I forgot to tell ye, before I sat down I locked the door and put the key in my pocket. I have made up my mind, do you see, to play a strong game of bluff. By Goad! man, I had such a lot of siller on! I looks at him straight in the face, and I says, 'Now, Mr. Jim Donnell, what have you to say for yourself, you

dom scoundrel, ye?' Up he starts with a fierce look." (Mr. Stewart here jumped up and put on a most malignant expression, and spoke very much through his nose, as he tried to imitate the champion.) "'Look'e here!' he says, in his Yankee tongue, 'what the blazes is the matter with you? Don't try on any of your funny business with me. I won't stand none of it. Who are you trying to get at? Here, just you open that door, you——' And he starts to come close to me. I pulls a revolver out of my pocket, and I still keeps my seat and waves with my hand quite unconcerned like. 'Sit down, Donnell,' I says quietly, 'sit ye down, my mon. I am a decent respectable member of society, and my word would be taken at a coroner's inquest, take my tip. You are a prize-fighter, and one whom any decent man would be justified in shooting if you took a liberty.' He looks at me for a bit, and then he thinks better on it, for he sits down, and he says kind of humbly, 'What is the matter, Mr. Stewart? I am sure I ain't done nothing, that you should first call me a dom scoundrel, and then threaten to bore me with your shooter.'

"'You know well what you have done, you thief! you blackguard!' says I, seeing I had got the whip-hand of him, and I goes on strong, meaning to play my hand out for all it was worth. 'Do you call yourself a man?' I says. 'Here have I been trying to do my very best for you, and I thought you was such a quiet decent-spoken fellow, and took a fancy to you. I paid your passage up from Cape Town when I knew nothing about you. I paid your hotel board, saw ye wanted for nothing, gets on a first-class match for ye, manages the whole thing. What was I to make out of it? You were to get the whole stakes; and, ye hound, ye! just look at that bet I entered in my book three weeks ago, that I meant as a pleasant surprise for you. Read it out loud,' I says, as I hands him my pocket-book, and he reads out: '£1,000 to Jim Donnell, alias Jansen the Swede, that he does not beat Joe the Brum.' 'What do you think of yourself now? You thought yourself very smart. Oh, yes! do ye understand, very smart indeed, but what have ye done for yourself? There will be no fight, I'll take care of that. Yes, the magistrate is a particular friend of mine, and I'll see, I tell you, that there is no fight, and that it is

made so uncommon hot for you in Kimberley that you will have to clear out double quick, without a single penny in your pocket. Now, that is what you have done for yourself.' He looks down at his feet, plays wi' the rim of his hat, wags his head from side to side" (Mr. Stewart here rolled his head around), "and then he says, with a shamed-like face, 'But what have I done, Mr. Stewart? tell me.'

"'What have you done?' I says, 'you know well what you have done! I wonder, now, who would have been your best friend in the long run, me or Eliason? My mon, you'll find in the long run 'Honesty is the best policy.'

"'Well,' he says, 'Mr. Stewart, I suppose someone has given the game away; but I tell you I ain't to blame so much as you think. Now I'll just tell you all about it, and you ken jedge for yourself.' So then he ups and tells me that Faganstine had told Eliason who he was, and that it was a dead moral for him to win, and that they had made a plan that he was to lose the fight, and so get at me, as I was backing him so heavily. Donnell made out—but of course you can't tell how much is the truth—that he refused point-blank to have anything to do with it; but they made him believe that I was the meanest of mean Scotchmen, and that he would hardly get anything out of the fight if he won. Eliason promised him £600 if he lost, and, having a wife and two little ones in the States, and wanting to get back to them, he said he had accepted his offer. He then asked for the Bible, man, and he took his solemn oath, if I would agree not to have the fight stopped, he would do his level best to win. Well, to make sure of him, I took my oath, too, that if he won the fight I would see that he got the stakes—barring my £200 that I put into them to help get the fight up—and that I would still give him the £1,000. You see, if it had not been for his consenting to sell the fight, I would not have got near half the money on I did. To make sure that neither Eliason nor Faganstine would get at him again, I went and lived at the 'Bend,' and never let the man out of my sight. I took Captain Wall into my confidence—ye mind yon man that refereed your bit scrap with Dooley. Well, I told him about the affair, and he got a bet of £1,200 to £1,000 from Saul Moses, Eliason's nephew, and went me halves.

Then I got a-hold of a lot of roughs, and paid them a few quid each to see that my man had fair play. I told them if they saw Eliason or Faganstine making any fuss or trying to interfere with the fight in any way, that they were just to burst them, don't ye understood. You know what a man like Eliason would do when he saw he was had, and his pieces going. But I have no time to tell you the particulars of the fight; I have to meet my managing director at half-past five. Eh, my! but it is ten minutes of that now!" Mr. Stewart said as he looked at his watch. "But I'll tell you all about it some other time, and I'll just tell you this much the now. They fought out at Barney Martin's, and my man won in an hour and twenty minutes. Joe was very game, but the other was far too clever for him; he hardly ever touched Donnell, who never had his left out of the other's eyes all the time, until he completely blinded him; very clever man, but no much of a puncher. And Eliason and Faganstine, man! it was a treat just to see them—a treat, I'm telling you, just to see them!" Here Mr. Stewart commenced to laugh so heartily, that it was some time before he was able to speak. At length, when he was sufficiently recovered, he went on, "Eliason, when he realised that Donnell was trying to win, got into the most frightful state of excitement; he called him a low, dirty thief, ramped at the referee, and claimed 'foul' time after time. Johnstone was referee, you know. Oh, yes, a great friend of mine, don't you understand? Well, I gave some of the boys the signal, and every time Eliason opened his mouth they pushed him and shoved him, knocked in his hat, and threatened to do for him; he got so frightened at last that he stood quiet and silent—feared for his life to say one word. Man! he made me a bit scared when he commenced to offer the boys no end of money to do something to stop the fight, but luckily for me he had brought no money with him, and they were na likely to trust the likes of him to pay them afterwards. I went and stood close to him, and did I not give him a nice time of it, kidding and chaffing him all the time! You must know he insisted on our putting down all the money we had wagered, so I felt nice and safe. By Goad! I never enjoyed myself so much before—one of the happiest days of my life, I tell ye! And Faganstine—oh, but you ought to have seen him; it was just better than

any play I ever saw. There he was running about like mad, greeting like a wee bairn, speaking to Jim Donnell in his corner between the rounds: 'Dear Mr. Donnell, keep your vord mit me, do please, and I vill give you all my vinnings. Oh, tink of mine vife, oh, ho, ho, ho,' and he would blabber away. Other times again he would call him all the 'dam tiefs and scondrils' he could lay his tongue to, until at last one of my gang hit him a fearful bash on the nose, and then he kept fairly quiet; but ye should have just seen him—him and Elias Eliason. Man! I tell you it was simply grand. Well I made a wee bit fortune over it. I gave Donnell his thousand pounds, but I'm done with him for ever. Ah! he is a mean skunk yon fellow, I tell you. It's lucky for me that I tumbled to the little bit game they got up for me, or I would have been nigh ruined. And I am going to tell you one thing, do you understand? I would lay my last shurt that you would lick this same man, Donnell. He is clever, but so are you, and you can hit three times as hard as he can. Yes, I used often to think of you; I would, I'm telling you, do you see, give you a present of £500 if you only just promise to have a go with him. Ah! he is a great god now amongst all the I.D.B. gang. But there is no use talking any sense to you, you are too fond of your own way of thinking to be convinced with common-sense. Well, my lad, I must hurry up. Have another drink—you won't! man, but ye are temperate! Are you coming my way? No? Well, come and see me soon again. Man! I'm real glad to see you, do ye understand; and about that billet, it will be all right, but I'll see you again. Well—so long the now."

Senior and Mr. Stewart then shook hands and separated, the former meditating as he went his way on the ethics of what Mr. Stewart termed "The noblest of all sports—PRIZE-FIGHTING."

CHAPTER XXIX.

EVER since the tragic death of young Morris, May Leslie's luck had turned dead against her. One misfortune after another befell her. She and Searight were again living in the little wooden cottage in Lennox Street. Ikey Mosetenstine, having discovered from his boy Charley to what extent he had been duped, demanded, in great wrath, that they should at once vacate his mansion in Du Toits Pan Road.

The compound system had put a stop to the planting of Kaffir thieves in the mines, wherefore when Charley returned to his old master May did not feel his loss so much; but she now found that the large connection so skilfully constructed had almost entirely disappeared.

The first rumour was that Morris had met his death by heart-disease, accelerated by a shock caused by his being trapped by May Leslie and Foxnisky,

Ikey Mosetenstine, from motives of revenge and for the sake of importance, had circulated a most exaggerated tale—viz., that he had returned to his house unexpectedly; that, on arriving and entering, he had heard voices; and that, looking through the keyhole, he was just in time to watch May Leslie selling a stone to Morris, and then to see Foxnisky, who had been in hiding in the next room, pounce upon him, whereupon the other had dropped down dead.

The detective, too, had reported to his chief just such an account of the trapping and death of Morris, and somehow this had leaked out, and went some way in corroborating Ikey's tale. But May Leslie took good care to tell her story—the true one; and she produced the testimony of those Morris had been gambling with in the back room of the Commercial Hotel to bear her out. They gave evidence in her favour. Yes, Morris had lost all his money, even his watch and chain, and they had heard him say he intended going to May Leslie to try and "raise the wind."

But though the majority of the I.D.B.s believed in May Leslie's version of the story, very few of them cared to

transact any business with her afterwards, for—so superstitious were these men—they believed dealings with her after the death of Morris would bring them “shlemozel.”*

A new branch of industry had started in Kimberley, the manufacture of “shlenter” stones, a name given to diamonds made of glass, and so cleverly done that some of the most expert buyers were deceived. Those who carried on this trade did so without incurring any risk of punishment by law, as they only sold to illicit buyers.

May Leslie bought, wonderfully cheap she thought, a parcel of beautiful large stones for £3,000 from a well-known all-round thief, Helmore by name. This was the first time that she had had dealings with him, for even she used to draw the line, but now she could not afford to be particular.

She got them safely across the border, and eventually they arrived home at her agents', Samuel Bros.; but, to her dismay, when next she heard from England she was informed that these fine large stones were all false. Then, through losing the valuable services of Sandy Dathrie at Christiana—that honest Scot having had to go away for a change after a severe attack of fever—and having now to incur all risks in getting her diamonds across the border, she suffered still further losses.

About this time a gang of lawless men, comprising two I.D.B.s, two horse-thieves, and an ex-detective, hit upon the happy idea of lying in wait and robbing the I.D.B.s, or those employed by them, whilst conveying their illicit gems across the border, thinking that they could do this in perfect immunity from the law, as they were only stealing from thieves.

May Leslie, among many others, suffered from their depredations. A parcel containing £4,000 worth of diamonds was taken from a runner employed by her.

To further add to her increasing troubles, Searight—to whom she was as obstinate as ever in refusing money beyond a certain point—found out that he could get credit for loans of money, though, truly, only at an exorbitant rate of interest. May Leslie's infatuation was well known, and money-lenders who knew her “strength,” as they termed it, profited thereby. In vain she swore on each occasion she paid Searight's debts that it should be the

* Bad luck.

last—the next time she should certainly let him suffer imprisonment. When it came to the test she always gave way.

She bravely struggled against adversity, but at last she recognised that fate was too strong, and she gave in. She saw in the near future the loss of all the money that had come from laborious scheming, and now vanished her dreams and hopes about making a fortune to be enjoyed by herself and lover in some other land, where he, cut off from his old associations, would be as fond of her as he had been at first. In her deep despondency great fear grew in her heart that when the day of their inevitable poverty arrived, Searight would desert her. This foreboding generated the demon Jealousy.

Her lover took great pleasure in visiting the canteens in which barmaids were employed. This plausible Irishman had that enviable command of badinage and small talk which made him highly appreciated by such women, but whilst this was flattering to his vanity, it tortured May Leslie with the dread of a successful rival.

To raise her drooping spirits, to help to drive away all apprehensions of her lover's present infidelity and eventual desertion, she was tempted to have recourse to strong drink. This, however, proved a disastrous failure, and only increased her despair and the tormenting thoughts that racked her brain; but madness was to her better than calm despair. When under the influence of drink her suspicions would become certainties, and, lashed into wild fury by her jealousy, she would break forth and accuse her lover of unfaithfulness.

Searight on such occasions was easily worsted, no matter how, on his side, his courage was stimulated by alcohol. He often trembled for his very life, as she would, in her mad fury, seize and make use of any utensil that happened to be near at hand.

But when those fits were over, oh! the remorse she suffered—the fear, too, that he now might leave her. Then she grovelled in the dirt before him, and he—he would take full advantage of her complete submission. After getting a good sum of money out of her—she was always extra liberal after one of her jealous fits—he would have a wild spree, come home drunk, and then wind up by beating her in a most savage and heartless manner, charging her with

infidelity with Foxnisky, though always aware of the cruel injustice of such an accusation. But it never entered his head to leave her. To her he owed absolutely the means of subsistence, as well as the means of indulging in his luxurious vices; besides, though tired of the woman, without one atom of affection for her, he could not endure the thought that any other should enjoy her love.

And she! she would rather have parted with her eyes, everything, than that this man should leave her. Her passion had become a positive disease that made every other emotion of the mind subservient to it. It was capable of influencing her in any direction, of driving her to any degradation, or, on the other hand, of inducing her to make the noblest of self-sacrifices.

Foxnisky the detective was still her slave, and May Leslie now, in her despair, her isolation, found his love and sympathy soothing. She learnt to pity this man from pitying herself.

Love is frequently fed by changes, often killed by dull uniformity. Each new departure in May Leslie's treatment of the detective only served as a fresh impetus to a passion which had ever been stimulated by pursuit, never cloyed by possession.

He now regained his former smartness, and with it his overbearing manner towards his fellow-members of the detective force.

It was late one afternoon; Searight and May Leslie were sitting on the stoep of the cottage in Lennox Street.

The Irishman had grown much stouter. His face, though still handsome, had a flushed and puffy look. He was stylishly dressed, and altogether had a most respectable appearance.

May Leslie was wearing, as usual, a plain black dress. She looked as young as ever, only a careworn sad expression had made its way into her face, which, however, increased instead of detracting from her beauty, as it gave to her an air of softness and refinement that had not before been there.

Searight lay back in an easy-chair, smoking a cigar, hands clasped behind his head, and legs crossed.

May Leslie, also in a lounge chair, was reading a novel, every now and then glancing at her lover.

Suddenly he jumped up. "By Jove! Look, May, there is Jack Senior coming up the street. I had no idea he had come back."

She rose and looked in the direction indicated. She saw Senior about twenty yards off, walking in their direction, and on the same side of the street. She mentally noted that he was better dressed than she had ever seen him before, the result of just coming from home, she thought; then she observed that he seemed in a great hurry, that his face was clouded by a very grim look, and that his hands were tightly clenched.

When he was within five yards Searight jumped down off the stoep, and, intercepting him, said most cordially, "Hullo, old man! when did you arrive? Glad to see you again, my boy;" and he held out his hand. Senior stopped and looked at him in a dazed sort of way, his mind being evidently much preoccupied. Searight still held out his hand. May Leslie looked at the young Englishman with a smile on her face, waiting for him to notice her before she spoke.

Then, to their surprise and utter discomfiture, Senior suddenly broke out, "Get out of the way, you cur! How dare you offer your filthy hand to me? I would sooner cut mine off than shake hands with you—a beast who not only lives on a poor woman, but brutally ill-treats her!" And he glared at him with flashing eyes.

Just at this moment a Cape cart containing two flashily dressed women, slightly coloured, was passing by. One of the girls, observing Senior's threatening attitude, called out chaffingly, "Go for him! I back the little one! Hit him on the boko!" The two occupants of the cab then laughed heartily.

The girls' fun seemed to cast a feeling of ridicule upon Senior, who at once lowered his eyes and looked somewhat ashamed; then, catching sight of May Leslie for the first time, he muttered as he half raised his hat, "Oh! I beg pardon—did not know you were there;" and he passed on as Searight quickly gave way for him on the side walk.

The Irishman said nothing, but a sickening and cowed feeling took possession of him. Had he been denounced by one to whom he knew he was physically superior, no doubt he would at once have been stung into a towering

rage, and would have quickly resented the insults with savage blows, but he knew well how easily this young Englishman could chastise him. And from this feeling of abject cowardice he even tried to draw some grains of solace. "It is my better feelings asserting themselves," he said to himself, well knowing, away down in his heart, he spoke falsely. "Yes, it is shame that made me feel so queer just now. I must make up my mind to leave this beastly woman who has demoralised me so."

Ah! poor May Leslie, courtesan and thief, if your deep, almost unfathomable love had only gone out to a man capable of doing justice to this the sweetest and most precious of heaven's gifts, to what heights of nobility, of heroism, might you not have soared!

Searight, without lifting his head, walked away.

May Leslie still stood on the verandah, as thoughts ran through her brain with irritating complexity. An intense shame came over her for the craven lover and herself, and a hatred suddenly sprang up in her heart for Senior—a hatred born of envy, as she recognised how superior, morally and physically, he was to her lover. She felt an itching, a longing to run after him, to tear his face with her sharp finger-nails.

But had not Senior acted somewhat inconsistently? He was innately shy, and, though possessing physical courage, was lacking to some extent in that classified as moral, and was often filled with shame, not only at not being brave enough to show disapproval of acts he condemned, but at being even little enough to simulate appreciation of them, in fear of ridicule. Depend upon it there must have been something else at work behind the scenes that stirred him to such virtuous wrath, something more than mere scorn of Searight's brutality.

He made for his hotel, and, arriving there, locked himself in his bedroom. With a look on his face similar to the one he bore in his boxing encounter with Tinlin, when all his evil passions were aroused by the other's unexpected and cowardly attack, he seated himself at the small toilet table, and placed on it some paper crumpled up into a ball by the tight pressure of his hand. There were several sheets of paper, which he spread and smoothed out in a hasty nervous manner, and then, with knitted brows and head supported by his hands, he read:—

"The Vicarage, Eightstone, Kent,

"October 1st, 188-.

"MY DEAREST JACK,—You must have been wondering and troubling why I have not written you before this. I could not, though I tried so hard, for I have been so miserably weak. I wrote a letter every week, but when it came to the time of posting I tore it up; then, next week again, I tried, but it was no use, and now at this, the last moment, I hope I will manage to force myself to send this one, though I shall be in Cape Town before you get it. I fear this letter will cause you pain. It is so hard sometimes, I find, to do what one thinks is the right. Helen told me she often found the same thing; and if she, who is so good, finds it so, what must a poor, wretched, sinful creature like me? Dearest Jack, I find it so difficult to even write the words. I can never be your wife—there, it is out now! I know now how you love me. You must try not to let this pain you, though I must be a wicked little thing, because when I think about you I am so selfish that I cannot help wishing you to be sorry. I feel that I cannot express myself to tell you exactly what is in my heart. I have prayed morning and night for help, but I seem just as weak as ever; but, please, Jack, try to understand more than I can write. When you came down here, before you left, I tried hard to force myself to tell you what was passing in my mind, but my courage failed me. My mind seems so confused, I don't know how to explain it all to you. But I must try. Dearest, I know now what a fearful sinful being I have been, and what a sin I committed. But I had been so badly brought up, I never thought it wrong, and a strong feeling came into my heart to be a good woman. I think it was so that you would think well of me, only I did not know how, and I felt it was impossible if I went into a bar as a barmaid. And you—I think Satan must have put it into your mind that it was not wrong. You were to blame, I suppose, but I cannot blame you. How could I, when it is all through that that I was brought to see the Truth and the Light? I often wonder if God intended that I should force you and myself to sin, so that I should come to know your sister, and through her learn true religion. But that cannot be, though it does seem like it. Oh, my mind does get so puzzled sometimes! I asked Helen if it were possible

that God would try to draw us to Him first through sin, and she said that her experience had been that she had learnt the most precious things in life by having made mistakes—that God had the power to bring good out of evil. But she said that it would not be right for us to do evil *knowing* it to be evil, and then expecting good to come out of it.

“Jack, dearest, I know now what a sacrifice you were going to make by marrying me, who am only a low-bred girl with low relations, and you a gentleman with none but ladies and gentlemen related to you. When you do marry, you must marry a lady, and a good woman too, like Helen, only I don’t think that possible. I don’t believe there is another woman like her in the world.

“After I had been down here for some time I found a new feeling growing within me, against my ever going back to you, whether you married me or not. It was so strange, I could not make it out, for my love seemed greater than ever for you. I prayed and prayed for guidance, and my prayer was answered. I know just as well as if He had appeared to me and spoke to me with His own lips. He put it in my heart that I must not marry you, it may have been for your sake, and to help me to do right He changed my love for you. He made it of a much higher kind, so different from what it was; just such a love as two souls who loved each other on earth would feel in heaven after their bodies died.

“Helen went back to Ireland a fortnight ago. She was telegraphed for by her friend who was so ill a little while ago, and she says she will be back in two weeks’ time. But, of course, she has given you all her news. She does not know I am sailing in three days. I won’t let her know till the last moment, so that she won’t be tempted to leave her friend for my sake; but I would so like to see her again. She has, indeed, been my good angel. But, darling, I don’t forget that you started the good work.

“Sister Eva is here, staying with the Blairs, who are old friends of hers. She came to stay with them on purpose to see me, she says. You remember you gave her Henry’s address. She and I are going back together on the ‘Pluto,’ which sails from London on Friday, and this is Tuesday.

“I told Sister Eva everything. I felt I must. I hope

you won't be angry with me. I knew she would not tell a soul, and would help to advise me, now that I must look out for a situation. She was awfully shocked and hurt when I told her. She advised me to lose no time—not to stay a day longer with your people in Eightstone than I could possibly help. She urged me to go out to South Africa and get you to marry me at once. I told her what I have told you—that I cannot marry you now, that it is God's wish I should not. But she does not understand. She says it is all nonsense, and that I must marry you for my own sake. Sister Eva is nice and kind, and very fond of me, only she is not like Helen. How I wish I could tell your sister everything, and get her to strengthen me in my wish to do right! Sister Eva can get me into the hospital as a nurse, as she is much thought of, and her uncle is Lord Goslyn—that seems to make people respect her so much, somehow.

“But she won't promise to try to get me into the hospital, she is anxious for me to marry you; but I think that when she finds out that I am determined she will get me in all right. Anyhow, I can be sure of earning my own livelihood in South Africa, it is so different there from this country.

“Helen always calls me Dorothea now in her letters. Dorothea, she says, means ‘the gift of God.’ Fancy her being so kind as to give me that name. Sister Eva likes it also, and calls me Dorothea now, too.

“My dearest Jack, I never, never can forget you, and my heart is so sore for you. You do love me so much, I know, but, for the sake of your love, please don't try to come between me and what I know is right. Now, I want you to do something. Please do it! if only for my sake, and it is surely right what I ask. Write to Helen at once, and tell her everything, leave out nothing; and, Jack, don't take all the blame on yourself. It is wrong to deceive people, I feel sure, and Helen says it is, too, even when you want to be generous or to prevent people's feelings from being hurt. Just tell the whole truth; she must be told sooner or later; do it at once, please do! And, Jack, give yourself up to Jesus, and then you will know what true happiness is. You must in time, because I pray for this night and morning, and Helen tells me I have only to ask with faith and it shall be granted. Dearest, my heart

yearns to sympathise with and comfort you, for I know how you will grieve when you read this.—I remain,

“For ever, your loving

“DOROTHEA.”

When Senior had finished he again crumpled up the sheets of paper in his hand. In his mind he had noted, mechanically, as it were—which even added a shade more of pain—the surprising progress the girl had made in her writing, and how well she now expressed herself. The seething storm of anguish raging in his heart, he knew would only simmer down into a calm of deeper pain. But not a thought entered his head that religion might have done much, was probably doing much, to elevate, to strengthen this poor little waif's desire to be a good and true woman. All his mind was concentrated on himself—the loss he would suffer.

There was a church spire in view some little distance off, raised above the houses around, which his eye caught. Looking in its direction he seemed to apostrophise it, as he exclaimed, beside himself, “Religion! religion! religion? the vilest thing that ever was invented! the outcome of ignorance, savagery, and superstition; that which has turned more brains than all other causes put together; has ever kept back science, advancement, and truth; that which has created more bitterness, dissensions, wars, and bloodshed than any other cause since life began!”

There was a Bible on the toilet stand, a parting gift from Cheeky; he picked it up, threw open the window, and pitched the sacred book as far as he could, using profane words as he did so. The Bible struck an ill-clad Kaffir on the head, who turned round, thinking that someone had thrown the book at him intentionally. He looked carefully about him, but seeing no one, stooped and picked it up. It looked nice and new, the red edges of the leaves took his fancy. “Ah!” he thought, “some good spirit must have sent it to me, so that I can give it in exchange for a bottle of Cape brandy, a thing for which I have been craving,” and he put the Bible in his breast inside his rags, and quickly turned his footsteps in the direction of a canteen in the West End.

CHAPTER XXX.

SENIOR rushed to Cape Town by the first train, buoyed with a hope that Cheeky would change her mind.

During the journey, which seemed to his feverishly impatient brain terribly long, his thoughts knew many changes. At one time he would be perfectly certain that he had only to see and ask her to come to him and she would not be able to resist; and his spirits rose. Then blank despair would fill his heart as he remembered the girl's character, gentle and true, but strong and unyielding when her mind was made up. He read her letter over and over again, and in vain tried to detect any sign of indecision.

Many were the imaginary conversations he held with her, and with ever varying imaginary results. He beseeched; he talked to her earnestly; he argued with her about religion, ridiculed it, and when he saw her unconvinced, unmoved, he became angry, and charged her with inconstancy; he even went so far as to accuse her of ingratitude, and reminded her of what she was, and what he had done for her, and then felt greatly ashamed of his own meanness. Sometimes he saw her yield and fall into his arms, so loving and penitent at having caused him so much pain; then again he saw her with pale tear-stained face, sorrowing and pained at his grief, but still determined to abide by her resolve.

The train, an hour and a half late, reached Cape Town at half-past five in the evening. Senior jumped into a cab and drove to Claridge's Hotel, secured a room, had a bath, dressed himself carefully, then went and had a shave and his hair trimmed, whilst his nerves were tingling with impatience. He wished to look his best, to have every tiny feather on his side, when weighing in the scales of success and failure.

At twenty minutes to eight he reached the Somerset Hospital. He rang the bell. The janitor quickly answered.

"Is Sister Eva in?"

"Yes."

"Can I see her? Is she disengaged?"

"I'll see, sir; will you step in, please?" and the man went off in quest of the sister.

A feeling now came over Senior like that of a guilty schoolboy who is about to be interviewed by a stern head-master regarding some serious delinquency; he wondered how Sister Eva would receive him, knowing what she knew.

But when she appeared in her nun-like dress, he felt somewhat reassured, especially as on recognising him, a bright smile of welcome lighted up her face. She most cordially shook hands with him, but before he could speak she stepped outside and said,

"Come, Mr. Senior, let us go for a little walk, I'm 'off' just now."

He followed, and they walked slowly along the beach road in the direction of the suburb named "Three Anchor Bay."

The dusk had vanished, but the moon, high up in the heavens, was shedding a soft light all around, making everything look beautiful, silver-tipping the waves that rose in response to a gentle sighing breeze and broke with mournful cadence on the rocks quite close to the road. The lion's head, bathed in a flood of the moon's white rays, looked bare and cold as it rose up in stately watch over the city lying to its left and hidden from sight. The air and everything seemed to Senior laden with a suppressed sadness. Nature was kindly singing to him in harmony with the feelings of his heart.

Sister Eva took the initiative.

"I think I know why you have called on me; you have just come from Kimberley, have you not? Are you still desirous of marrying her?"

Senior replied in the affirmative with so much emphasis of earnestness that a sympathetic sigh escaped Sister Eva.

Then the sister told him that she had done all she could to persuade Dorothea (the unfamiliar name struck him curiously) to marry him, if only for her own sake and good name. All the passage out the girl had been constantly asking her to try to get her into the hospital, to learn to be a nurse, but she had consistently refused, thinking it was only a passing whim; but after they had arrived in Cape Town, Dorothea proved she was in real earnest, for she tried to obtain a situation as a common servant and succeeded; she was engaged, only she,

Sister Eva, had the engagement cancelled, and then got her as a probationer into the hospital.

She expressed her doubts as to Dorothea altering her mind, and Senior felt his heart sink very low at this. He asked if he could not see the young girl, as he thought he might induce her perhaps to alter her mind. But the other told him that she had already endeavoured to get Dorothea to agree to see him, feeling sure he would come, and she had refused. "It would only cause pain to both of us," she had said.

Sister Eva strongly advised Senior, moreover, not to attempt to see her against her wish. "You would only defeat your own object," she said—"martyrize her, as it were, in a sort of way, and only make her more decided. Apparent indifference, as a rule, is, in my experience, much more effectual with women than showing passionate desire; but, of course, Dorothea is so strange, one cannot judge her by others, and she is actuated by such high motives, it is most difficult indeed to know what to do to influence her in a case of this kind."

Senior assented with a feeling of pride, analogous to that born of possession, at hearing Cheeky so spoken of by this middle-aged lady, who came of so good a family—and his yearning for her increased.

"She will make a splendid nurse," the sister went on. "You have no idea what exceptional aptitude she has shown for the work even in the two days she has been in the hospital; and she is so patient, so humble and obliging, that she is bound to get on well with everyone, nurses, doctors, and patients alike, and I am very fond of her; she makes a capital little companion to me, I can assure you. I look upon her as a most important acquisition to the establishment. She is so clever, takes so much pains to learn, that it is quite a pleasure to show her anything; but for her own sake I am anxious she should marry you. If she does not there will always be a black stain on her name—and then she was introduced to your friends as your wife. It does seem so dreadful!" (Senior blushed and felt uncomfortable.) "I won't, however, add to your pain by alluding to the past," she went on, observing Senior's confusion. "Dorothea has told me everything, and I am pleased to see you are so anxious to do the right and what is plainly your duty."

"Duty, indeed!" thought Senior; there was precious little anxiety on his part regarding the matter from a "duty" point of view; he was simply conscious of yearning love and burning desire to possess this girl, intensified to maddening tortures by her voluntarily giving him up.

As he left her at the hospital, Sister Eva bade him "Good-night" in such a kindly tone, that in his heart rose a soft feeling of gratitude to her and a great pity for himself that almost brought the tears to his eyes.

He took the sister's advice, and did not try to force himself on the girl, only he could not resist the temptation of taking walks in the direction of Three Anchor Bay, past the hospital; but he never chanced to see her.

Letters were sent from time to time by Sister Eva, but she could give him no hope of a change in Dorothea's resolve.

At last he wrote to Cheeky herself. He worded the letter kindly enough, but he tried to make out that he was somewhat indifferent to the course she had decided upon. He informed her he intended returning to Kimberley, and he only wished to bid her good-bye.

Receiving no answer, he again wrote; but his second letter was returned unopened, enclosed in another envelope, inside of which was a small slip of paper with the following, in her handwriting: "Please don't write any more, I cannot open any letter from you."

This filled him with anger, and then with sadness.

Then, partly from pique and partly from despair and braggadocio, but also with a notion that it would reach her ears and might make her relent out of concern for his spiritual welfare, he commenced to drink hard, and knocked around with Maller and a few others of similar kidney, who welcomed the opportunity of a good spree. He drank and shouted the meaningless choruses of vulgar songs with the rest, and tried to make himself believe that it was the proper thing, under the circumstances, to become reckless and go to the dogs. The idea that Cheeky might then blame herself as the cause, and grieve sadly over his fall, brought with it a sort of maudlin pathos.

Sister Eva heard news of his dissipation—she took a lively interest in him now—and wrote him a short note that quickly brought him to his senses. She expressed a

hope that she had not been mistaken in him, and gave it as her opinion that if he thought he would move Dorothea by his follies, he was greatly mistaken, he was going the wrong way to work altogether. She had lofty ideas about people and things, and though he might be wounding her feelings, he was running the risk of losing the strong regard she had for him.

Sister Eva was not altogether right, for the girl had felt for the first time her resolution shaken when she heard of the way Jack was going on.


Senior was thoroughly ashamed of himself after reading the nurse's letter. Being Cheeky's friend and patroness, too, he was anxious to have her on his side, to be well thought of by her, independently of the natural aversion he had to being thought little of by anybody. So he wrote a short note to Cheeky, and enclosed it in one to Sister Eva, whose mediation he solicited; it was the last time he would bother her, he promised.

"My dearest Girl," the note ran, "please forgive me. I have been a miserable, unfeeling brute. Amongst other petty thoughts, I had the very mean one that by reckless folly I might win your compassion and get you to change your mind. My love for you I have shown in the most wretchedly selfish manner. I have only been thinking of and studying myself, not considering you in the least, or what you have decided is your duty. But, dearest, I am in my right mind again, and shall carefully avoid giving you any distress in the future. I hope you will forgive me, though I must have sunk in your esteem by my late madness.—Ever yours,
JACK."

This time there was an answer. With nervous haste he tore open the envelope; he was still in hopes, like a condemned man on the morning of the execution. He read:

"DEAREST,—I love you too much ever to let you sink in my esteem. What would I be now if it were not for you? No matter what you do, my heart is wholly yours. But, dearest, for your own sake, pray to Jesus for forgiveness, not to me, for I am only a poor sinful creature, full

of sinful thoughts. Pray to Jesus, and abide by His guidance, as I have done, and shall always try to do, be it ever so hard.—Yours, as ever,

DOROTHEA." 

After he had read this letter his heart filled with a cold despair; hope almost left him.

Two months after his arrival in Cape Town from Kimberley, he was walking one afternoon down Adderley Street. He was in low spirits. Abstractedly his gaze wandered to the ships lying at anchor in the bay, rising and falling to a long, low swell that was setting in from the north. He thought of the wanderings of these vessels, all the different places they had been to, and how they would keep continually roaming here and there, until at last they were engulfed in some storm, driven on a lee shore, or—if luck attended them—ended their useful days like those coal-hulks he saw anchored close in shore, covered with numerous traces of their venturous wanderings—scrapes and dents from rocks and piers or other vessels with which they had come in contact. The time would come when their staunchest timbers, that had braved the fury of many a fierce tempest in their days of strength, would be left to rot and crumble away on the beach, often a nuisance and danger to other craft. Then Senior's eyes mechanically wandered to the figure of a young girl, a little in front, walking along with sprightly step.

She was looking young and fresh. She had on a cream delaine dress with a tiny pink spray at the waist; on her head a small pink bonnet, and she was carrying a cream-coloured sunshade. "Yes, and that young girl," he went on soliloquising—"she, too, if lucky enough to live long, will become a nuisance to some of a younger generation, and when she dies her relations who tend her may assume a hypocritical sorrow, but in their hearts they will feel relieved, and it is but natural. Ah! the whole thing—" But here his mournful meditations were abruptly checked. The girl who had been helping him in his philosophy turned her face as she passed a shop-window, apparently to criticise the reflection of herself in the large panes of plate glass, and he recognised Cheeky. His heart gave a great leap. He quickened his steps. He noticed as he hurried along that she had grown ever so much stouter;

not an improvement either, he even mentally noted amidst a whirl of rushing thoughts. He marvelled why she should be so dressed; then came a thought, a hopeful one, which caused his pulse to throb with radiant excitement. She had left the hospital, she had changed her mind, and was now probably looking for him, or how could she be out at this time, and in that dress? Catching her up, he touched her shoulder, and said, in a low anxious tone, "Cheeky!"

The girl turned round, and he saw a face very much like the one he expected to see, but, alas! not the one. A strong feeling of disappointment rose up from his heart, nearly blinding him; he even staggered as he had the presence of mind to raise his hat with conventional politeness and apologise for his mistake.

The owner of the face blushed and looked shy as she answered, "Don't mention it."

The tones of her voice made his heart thrill, so soft, low, and musical, so like Cheeky's. Could she possibly be a sister?

It did not strike him that as Cheeky was only a low-bred girl it could hardly be that this well-dressed young lady, who, by all appearance, belonged to the better classes, could be a relative. Actuated by the thought he spoke again. "Please excuse me, but you are so like a—a young lady, the one I first mistook you for. Might I ask your name? Mine is Senior," he added, thinking that if the girl were any connection she would probably have heard of him.

"My name," replied the girl, "is Leon-More; I think I know something about you; you are Miss Smirker's—a—a-guardian, are you not?" and then she smiled, as if amused at the idea of the girl having a guardian so young.

"And you are the lady who was so kind in helping her with her studies?"

This was a nice way of putting it, Violet felt. "Ah, he is certainly a gentleman," she said to herself, as she smiled and nodded a gracious assent. She held out her hand and said frankly, "Come, I think we are sufficiently introduced to shake hands. Please do tell me all about Miss Smirker, I am so anxious to hear how she got on at home."

Senior accepted her overture gratefully, as he was conscious of a pleased feeling, even after his bitter disappointment,

at meeting and talking with one who had known Cheeky so intimately, and who, by a curious coincidence, was also so remarkably like her.

Then he said, "May I walk with you?"

"With pleasure."

They turned and walked in the direction of the Avenue, and on arriving there, strolled up and down under the spreading gnarled branches of the old oaks, now clothed in the fresh verdure of early summer.

Cheeky formed the subject matter; they branched off every now and then into little side issues, all leading back to her.

Senior was glad and grateful to be able to talk about his present trouble. He told Violet of his love and anxious desire to marry the girl, of his belief in her love for him; but now, owing to an absurd idea that had sprung up out of a sudden religious enthusiasm—a belief that Christ did not wish her to marry—she was making both herself and him most miserable; how a lady nurse, Sister Eva, niece to Lord Goslyn, had got her into the Somerset Hospital, there to learn nursing.

But though Violet, curious to know all about the young girl's antecedents, and how he had first come in contact with her, tried delicately and skilfully to lead him on to these matters, he carefully avoided saying a word that would reflect in the least on Cheeky.

He told her how well she had been received at home amongst English ladies, what a great favourite she had made herself with his people, and how his sister loved and thought so much of her.

Violet expressed herself delighted to hear all this. She told him all about Cheeky's studies, and her own system of teaching; its wonderful success being borne out by her most marvellous progress. She pathetically described in low tones the young girl's anxiety when Senior's correspondence suddenly ceased; her terrible grief when news of his illness reached them in answer to her, Violet's, letter. She told him, too, of the girl's pluck on board the "Cicero" in putting the rude Bouncer to rout.

"Oh, when she left, Mr. Senior," Violet went on, "I felt quite broken-hearted. I had become so interested, so attached to the dear girl, I was quite overcome when I saw the vessel sailing away. I cried like a little baby, I

could not help myself," and she now wiped her eyes with her handkerchief, as if affected at the bare remembrance of her grief.

It was a sweet sorrow to Senior to hear Cheeky's praises sung in such pretty tunes, and his heart was drawn to the sympathetic woman by his side.

Then, feeling his way, he gave vent to some mild disparaging remarks about the religion which he considered was the cause of his present unhappiness, and Miss Leon-More, delighted at the opportunity of showing off her independence of thought, tersely aired some of her atheistical ideas, and wound up by saying, "Yes, it is wonderful how conservative the world is when one comes to think of it; it is simply astounding, how even people with plenty of brains can for a moment believe in such a silly relic of barbarism and superstition—a thing a child, if unprejudiced and left to itself, would laugh at as the most impossible fairy tale or fable."

Senior winced, albeit he felt pleased to find this young girl so thoroughly of his own opinion. She was evidently something very much above the common, he thought, seeing wisdom because his own sentiments were echoed. Conversation flowed easily between them, and they continued their walk up and down, seemingly forgetful of the passing time. A little later on in the cool of the afternoon the Avenue became full. Nurses with perambulators, and laughing, chatting, merry children thronged the paths. Well-dressed men and women leisurely promenaded under the cool shade of the trees. Every now and then Violet bowed to a passing acquaintance, and Senior mechanically raised his hat. Then gradually the place commenced to empty as the dusk came on and a more mixed assortment of humanity began to use it, amongst which soldiers with their gay showy uniforms seemed the most conspicuous.

But Senior noticed nothing—took no heed of the increasing dusk; his mind was full of Cheeky and the pretty girl at his side who was so like her in face and voice, and who seemed so compassionate and sensible. He was dimly conscious, though, of a slightly irritating effect as he looked into her face, caused by the little tinge of green close to the pupils of her big brown eyes; just as one possessing an artistic sense would feel a kind of

pain at a daub on a beautiful stained glass window of some Gothic church.

And Violet, who was always so shy on first introduction to young men—a shyness born of a painful anxiety to appear well, to do herself justice—wondered and was pleased to feel herself so much at her ease with Senior. She was somewhat attracted. He was a gentleman, an English one, too (many colonial girls unpatriotically prefer these importations); pity he was not better looking, but he had a fine figure, and he must be rich, for look at the money he gave Lizzie. Wealth was very important in the eyes of this girl, who had of late years been so hampered by the want of it. And a pleased feeling came over her at the thought that her late pupil had given him up, and a hope came into her mind that she would not change her resolution.

“Dear me,” she suddenly exclaimed, looking at her watch, “it is a quarter to seven. My mother will wonder what ever has become of me. How the time has passed to be sure. I had no idea it was so late. I have just time to catch the seven train to Rondebosch.”

He saw her off by the train, and gratefully accepted her invitation to come and see her at Rondebosch and be introduced to her mother.

As he lay awake for some little time that night smoking his last pipe, the fumes of which seemed this night to have a more than usually sedative effect upon his brain, Cheeky was in his mind as usual, but he also thought of her whom he had met and talked with so long that day; her so like Cheeky that he had been tempted several times to take her in his arms and embrace her, as one might kiss the photograph of an absent Love.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SENIOR'S new friendship ripened rapidly. Violet, though still young, was, she dreaded, already on a fair way to be placed on the shelf. Like so many colonial girls, led by the way the military men are petted and spoilt

by Cape society to think that they were great matrimonial "catches," she had been ambitious to secure one for a husband. Ever since she was seventeen she had flirted with the officers of the different regiments that came to Cape Town. She could have married well in civil life, in fact had been once engaged to a worthy man, who had the means of supporting her comfortably in her own sphere of life, but she had jilted him, being deceived by the attentions of a young red-coated warrior, who, alas! had only been seeking amusement, not a wife.

Young Sparker, of the 190th, had been the one who had so misled her, and she, perceiving in time that disappointment seemed in store for her, had made a bold attempt to secure him; but the regiment was ordered to Natal, and young Sparker felt greatly relieved at thus being able to get out of "such a devil of a mess," and his confidence and self-respect rose at the fresh proof of his lady-killing qualities.

Violet discovered to her sorrow, when she would fain turn in her disgust to those engaged in civil pursuits, that they would have none of her, and that, like the soldiers, so far as matrimony was concerned, they, too, in colonial phraseology, were "dead off."

She was dubbed the "Garrison Hack;" and even Mother Grundy, who, warmed by the genial clime, the bright blue sky of South Africa, takes a more tolerant view of things generally than in the duller atmosphere of England, now looked askance at her. She now was asked scarcely anywhere. She discovered she had made, with all her cleverness, a grievous mistake.

Poor girl! Had her mother been a woman of the world, who could have given her daughter the benefit of her own knowledge and experience, instead of only a simple-minded woman, artlessly fond of her home and her children, how different might have been the result!

But now she saw an opportunity to profit by her own experience. Here was a young fellow, an Englishman, evidently of both means and family, and by whom her unenviable reputation was unknown.

Though Senior was so different from the young men she had been accustomed to associate with, it did not take her long to sum him up. He was a quiet, steady, sensible young fellow with ideas, so she also must appear a quiet,

steady, sensible young lady with ideas. She started, she thought to herself, with one great advantage—her likeness to the girl who had given him up.

And she played her cards with skill and really enjoyed the game.

Senior, still suffering from the great wrench his heart had received, found the girl's companionship only too attractive.

She generously, but formally, offered her friendship to him, but he, finding himself strangely drawn towards her, hesitated. He decided to have an understanding with her, for, in the chivalry of youth, he had made up his mind to be true to Cheeky; to marry none but her; to wait on and on, for years, if necessary; for he felt certain the time would come when she would change her mind. And now, when Violet proffered her friendship, he told her his firm resolve, and asked her whether or not she believed in Platonic friendships, looking terribly confused immediately afterwards—it looked so like impudent conceit on his part to put it in that way, he thought.

But Violet looked at him curiously, and shrewdly guessed what was passing through his mind. With an ingenuous air she replied, "Oh, yes, certainly I do. I know there are some people who profess not to think it even possible, but surely they must judge others by themselves. Nothing is more beautiful to my mind than for young people with no idea of love to distract them, and who have thoughts, perhaps pursuits, in common, to be the closest of friends. What a terrible thing is it to think that one cannot have a man-friend—one whom you can respect, admire, go to for advice, exchange ideas with! Oh! Mr. Senior, I hope you don't think otherwise! I am sure you are sufficiently strong-minded to be a real friend to a girl without falling in love with her."

"You see, I am in love already," said Senior abstractedly.

"Well, I am not"—Violet laughed—"and not likely to be. I feel perfectly certain of myself. I suppose some day I shall marry, but it will not be for years, I have made up my mind about that. And I may as well be perfectly candid with you, Mr. Senior; I like you, I respect you, I even admire you, for you are so different from the general run of young men I have met; you are so natural and sensible, but—" Violet shook her head, as if to give

him to understand that if he thought he was capable of inspiring any feeling beyond this he was vastly mistaken.

"And I have already been planning," she presently went on, "how I can help you in your present trouble. I feel so much for you, and I have such an affection for Lizzie. I am so sorry to see her punishing herself, and you as well, for the sake of a foolish fancy. I used to have so much influence with her, I think I may have some still. I have already been thinking and thinking the best way to go about trying to persuade her to give up this silly notion. Oh! I should be so pleased to see you both married and living happily to the end of your lives, like the princes and princesses in the fairy tales." She clasped her hands at the anticipated joy. "I am very cunning." She smiled archly. "I should not be the very least surprised if I succeeded. Oh, oh, I hope I shall!"

And Senior believed in her. He could not help it, being biassed in her favour by her likeness to Cheeky, who was so truthful and honest; besides, Violet did seem so thoroughly sincere. So, without doubt or fear, he gave himself full scope to enjoy this intimacy.

They went for long walks together; Senior was fond of exercise, and so, of course, was Violet. They talked philosophy, Senior discussing with her the Emancipation of Women, Atheism, and then the more delicate topic of Love. He expounded to her his theory and belief as to the non-sanctity of marriage—rather dangerous ground for two such young people to tread upon.

Violet obtained books on as many of these subjects as she could, and quite surprised Senior—sometimes by giving out as original ideas those she had conned from them—with the profundity of her mind.

She played to him and charmed him with her sweet pathetic voice, that had so often misled people into crediting her with feeling she did not possess.

Of course, they soon got to call one another "Jack" and "Violet," but all in a Platonic way.

Violet, remembering Cheeky's proficiency in club-swinging, expressed a desire to learn, so Senior had a pair of clubs turned and gave her lessons. They played tennis, went rides together, in fact seemed to be inseparable.

Mrs. Leon-More looked upon their intimacy with

unaffected approval. Jack was the sort of son-in-law she would really like.

But though Senior was more than ever convinced that she was a splendid girl—"a rattling good chum," as he expressed it—his love still remained true to the little girl at the hospital.

Violet, true to her word, went to see Cheeky, and she did tell the girl, but in a flippant way, that she was a silly thing to give up such a good chance of getting married to a good fellow and a gentleman too. Then she tried to put the girl on her mettle by telling her that she did not for a moment believe that she really intended to remain long in the hospital; in fact, she had made a bet of a dozen pairs of gloves with Jack (Cheeky winced at the familiar use of the name) that she would be out and married to him inside twelve months. Violet hinted that she thought it was rather clever of the other, for no doubt it made Jack all the more eager.

She gave a detailed account of how she had first met Senior; how he had mistaken "me for you, dear;" of all their friendship, their walks, their talks, club-swinging, tennis, riding; of how his spirits were fast improving; only, to serve her own ends, she coloured and garnished here and there, as her fancy dictated—for Violet's imagination was fertile.

Cheeky sat silent, only answering in monosyllables. When the other bade her good-bye and offered to kiss her, she drew back and said, "Don't kiss me, for I hate you," and left abruptly.

Poor Cheeky suffered tortures after the visit. Previously she had caught herself wishing that Jack would not marry a woman possessing attractions and goodness calculated to gain from him more, or even as much, love as he had bestowed on her; but the dread now that he might marry Violet, who was so little worthy of him, was a stab to the heart. Ah! she felt sometimes, it did not matter what woman he married, she would never be satisfied. She could not help feeling piqued to think that he was regaining his happiness so quickly and seemingly forgetting her. It stung her, too, that Violet should impute unworthy motives to her. But what gave her the most pain was the consciousness of all these wicked, selfish thoughts, that came unbidden, and whose tenor it seemed

impossible for her to change, and, oh ! she did so long to be truly good ! She felt overwhelmed, as she sat watching by the bedside of a dying man whom Sister Eva had placed under her care. On a sudden impulse she sank down on her knees by the patient's bedside and beseeched forgiveness and help. The dying man, who was moaning weakly in the last agony of death, turned and looked at her, and a light came into his dull eyes. She was praying for him. The thought of her tender solicitude went even to his heart, that was gradually ceasing to throb, and made him feel easier. "Ah !" he thought, "her prayer has been already answered." Cheeky prayed with fervour and faith, rising from her knees happier and brighter, and with renewed courage to persist in her strenuous endeavours to do the right.

Violet reported dismal tidings to Senior of her visit to Cheeky. She sighed deeply as she said, "I never saw such a change ; religion must have turned her head." And she gave him a long account of her interview, in such a way that she appeared to great advantage as a tactician, while the other was a fanatic, who could not, alas ! be brought to see the error of her ways.

It almost disheartened Senior, but he was as resolved as ever to wait. He spoke about going back to Kimberley again to start work. "Nothing like keeping the mind employed," he said ; he would just have to hope on.

Violet found that she had set herself a difficult task, and when Senior spoke of returning to Kimberley, her heart sank. She grew eager and excited.

One night, six months after first meeting Senior, Violet was sitting in the small drawing-room of the cottage in Rondebosch. Her mother and brother had gone to spend the evening at the house of a relation who was holding a small gathering. Violet had made an excuse at the very last moment, pleading a severe headache.

She expected Senior to come that night. She still retained the dress she had put on ostensibly for the evening party to which she had been going. It was a black lace one, cut very low, and just hung to her shoulders by bits of ribbon, for Violet's neck, shoulders, and arms were of surpassing whiteness, and, like all women, she liked to display her graces. She had arranged her hair as her late pupil had been in the habit of wearing hers, plainly

and gracefully coiled at the nape of the neck. The lamp was lit, but turned low, and through the shade that covered it a faint pink light permeated the room.

At length Senior came. It surprised him to see her so dressed. She hastened to explain that she had quite forgotten that he was coming until the last moment; she had made an excuse not to accompany her mother and brother; any way, she was very glad to stay at home, she did not care for gaiety.

Violet's voice sounded husky and uncertain, for she felt strangely excited, like a man who is about to stake the last of a fortune he has been gambling away. Senior noticed the quivering voice, and it made him also feel a little nervous, he knew not why.

They sat together on the sofa, and he naturally adopted the low tone in which the girl spoke. It seemed like the clandestine meeting of two lovers, between whom love was a guilty thing.

Violet was close to him, and often to call his attention she would place her hand on his arm, and Senior felt his nervousness increase.

She talked to him of the ever-welcome subject, Cheeky, and quite naturally from her she drifted into talking of love.

Then she went to the piano, and played and sang the songs she had heard her pupil sing; and she imitated to perfection the other's peculiar slurring of one word into the other, due to the want of cultivation.

Senior sat as in a dream; Cheeky was again with him in Kimberley, in London, on the river singing to him as he sculled; she was surely in the room now! Oh, how his heart beat! He rose and mechanically went and stood with elbow resting on the piano, gazing at Violet as she sang.

The girl looked at him. She smiled sweetly, invitingly; her bosom, dazzling above the black dress she wore, heaved voluptuously.

Then she played waltzes, only simple waltzes, but she could play with feeling, and she now infected him, by the melodies her fingers weaved, with the sensuality of her own nature.

Senior still gazed upon her, drinking in the ravishing beauty of her form in the soft light, and with the insinuating music tingling through his nerves. His brain was

set on fire, but his mind remained perfectly lucid, and so strong in its analysis that at that moment he clearly saw how Violet had from the very commencement set herself to entrap him. Little things hitherto having neither meaning nor connection during their late so-called friendship now flashed through his brain. Her motive alone misled him, it was passionate love, he believed, and this thought flattered his vanity. Yes, he saw everything, but he felt powerless; knew that as sure as he was standing there, he should fall. He tried to deceive himself that he was striving to prevent it—even thought of Cheeky and said to himself "I must be true to her," but well knowing he would not, and that the words were only a hollow mockery. Something seemed to laugh derisively within him, like a devil that had taken possession of his soul, amused at the utter helplessness of its environment. Senior knew that if by leaving the room and only going into the next one he could have saved himself and have secured Cheeky, he could not have stirred a step. He was conscious of a force as strong as the law of gravity compelling him to remain. He tried to make himself believe that he did not know what he was doing, and that that should be his excuse to himself after; but he well knew otherwise, and that such a plea could not be accepted. Then he marvelled greatly at his clearness of vision, yet his total want of self-control. His mind was so active, so rapid, that all these thoughts in one combination seemed to pass through his brain like a vivid flash of lightning. He still struggled with himself, but with no hope of ultimate conquest, only with a dim idea of holding out as long as he could, just as one would try to see how long the breath can be retained.

And Violet, with evil thoughts excited by pursuit, her eyes, full of beseeching invitation, flashing like fire that looked into and scorched his soul, still fixed her gaze upon him.

Then like a whirlwind passion that swept all before it, the pent-up breath must be released. He threw his arms around her, showering fierce kisses upon her white face.

She rose, now beaming with triumph and anticipation and with the *abandon* of a bad woman returned his ardent caresses.

"Do you love me then?" she cried, as she tried to hold him back so that she could look into his eyes.

"Yes, yes!" he exclaimed hoarsely, and he roughly pressed her to him, as if he would devour her with the passion she had aroused.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A YOUNG girl, in nurse's garb, sat on watch in a ward of the Somerset Hospital. Every bed had its suffering patient, for the hospital was full, owing to an epidemic of typhoid fever that was raging in Cape Town,—that city of unwholesome odours. The number of nurses was insufficient, and this young one had a wearied dejected look in her sweet, pretty face from over-work.

It was morning. A patient approaching convalescence was reading *The Cape Times*. Suddenly he dropped off to sleep, letting the paper fall. Wearily the young nurse picked it up, and wearily her eye scanned it. She gave a start, a gasp, and her face became blanched and livid, and her lips trembled, but she still held the paper, still kept her eyes fixed on that which had so suddenly attracted her attention. She read the following, mechanically, over and over again, as if she failed to grasp its full meaning.

"At Rondebosch, on the 12th inst., by special license, J. Senior to Violet Gwendolen Leon-More."

Ah! what a sudden revulsion of feeling came upon this girl, this poor little reformed waif, who had of late found the new path on which she had entered so narrow that the thorns that lined it tore her tender flesh at every step. The sharp jagged spine she had this moment encountered pierced so deep that it entered her very heart. What a sudden sharp pain it caused, so keen that from its very intensity soon followed a merciful numbness. So many thoughts, so many emotions, rushed into action that the channels of the brain got choked, and the mind almost ceased working, only being aware of the first agony of pain the thrust had caused, and a dim dismal foreboding of the suffering that was soon again to begin, and to which there would seem to be no end.

The tears which would have brought relief seemed all swallowed up in the depth of the wound. It never struck her—as now was her wont when suffering—to call upon heaven for aid. At this moment, though the consciousness of it was but dimly obscure, a strong undercurrent of feeling was already setting in against all that had tended to lose to her him whom she loved. All the love that had existed in her imagination and been lavished on an ideal Saviour was suddenly and ruthlessly swept away by her earthly love, overwhelming in its objective reality, that had only gathered strength by the way it had been forced back. A fierce longing entered her heart to go out of the hospital, find her lover and cast herself down at his feet, and crave for mercy and forgiveness. Then her blood boiled and seethed with murderous heat when she thought of the one that barred the way. Too late! too late! her heart moaned forth in pitiful accents. She rocked herself to and fro like a child in pain, and cried, "Oh, my, my! Oh, my, my!" but still the tears would not come. The nurses and patients turned round; even dying men, aroused to a last worldly curiosity at the sudden exclamation of pain from the young girl, glanced in her direction with their dull eyes. A nurse, in nun-like dress, came to her side.

"Why, Dorothea, what is the matter? Are you ill, child? How white you are! Poor child, you have been sadly over-worked. What is the matter? Tell me."

Dorothea looked up with dazed expression and slowly shook her head as she answered, "Nothing, Sister Eva, oh, nothing!" Then she again looked at the notice of marriage. Sister Eva took the paper and scanned it, without any thought of discovering there the cause of the girl's sudden distress. Dorothea pointed with her finger, and then Sister Eva read in low tone, "At Rondebosch, on the 12th inst., by special license, J. Senior to Violet Gwendolen Leon-More."

"Well, you see, Dorothea, I told you," began Sister Eva, and she was going to remind the other of her prophetic wisdom, when she was stopped by the look of intense pain on the girl's face, who now exclaimed, "Oh, it cannot be true! I must go out and see him. Oh! I want to love him, to ask him for his forgiveness. I only want to love him alone. I feel so miserable! so miserable!" and again she rocked herself to and fro.

Sister Eva's heart melted. "May," she said, addressing another nurse who stood close, looking with surprise and curiosity at the sudden emotion of the girl, "please attend to this case," and she hurriedly gave her the doctor's instructions regarding the patient Nurse Dorothea had been attending. "Dorothea is unwell, she has had too much to do of late, like the rest of us, only she is young and unaccustomed to it. I shall take her to her room; probably after a little rest she will be all right again."

She led the girl to the room shared by both of them. She made Dorothea sit down on her small iron bedstead, and, with arms around her, tried to soothe her. "Never mind, dear; if he has so soon forgotten you, he is not worth your grief."

"He is! he is! how dare you say that! It is my fault alone," exclaimed Dorothea, as she tried to disengage herself from the other's embrace, and the effort of defending her lover seemed to give a little relief to the gnawing pain.

"He only married her because she looked like me—because she looked like me. I feel sure of that," and in the midst of her grief this thought that had so suddenly entered her mind brought its comfort.

"Oh, she has been so false! full of fine talk, but her heart is bad. Oh! she is as false, as false as—I don't know what!" exclaimed Dorothea.

Then Sister Eva changed her attitude. She said with woman's tact: "This girl, Leon-More, is no doubt a very worthless person. She has a very bad reputation. Most likely Mr. Senior has been attracted by the unfortunate likeness, and she has taken advantage of it and ensnared him into marrying her. But he will find out his mistake; he will rue it all his life. He will never be able to forget you, my dear girl."

The fact of Jack's probable disappointment was also, strange to say, some little balm, and at last the tears, now aided by Sister Eva's well-directed sympathy, began to flow, but in spite of them, as her mind fully regained its functions, a sorrow, deep and hopeless from despair, filled her heart. She realised that her lover was now for ever lost to her, and that the violent storm of grief this loss had brought about swept her away from the sweet rest she had found in religion, leaving her rudderless and well-nigh

wrecked. As she now faintly saw that haven on the horizon as she drifted away, she felt much inclined to declaim against it. She thought, in her now rebellious state, in spite of its apparent sweet restfulness, that it was an insecure harbour, with no firm anchoring ground. Poor waif! her future was at this moment a blank one, for all hope and aim seemed sapped out of her life.

Sister Eva returned to the fever ward, thinking it better now to leave the weeping girl alone in her grief.

Dorothea's tears fell fast as the deep sobs broke forth, welling up from her wounded heart. "Oh, Jack! oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, as she again rocked herself to and fro, "it's all my own fault—all my fault! but I'll be true to you still. I will! As true as death, I will!" and the poor sorrowing soul, with the habit she had retained from her childhood, when wishing to express absolute truth or firm determination, lifted up her head, and gravely passed her hand across her throat.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

YES, Senior had married Violet.

Ever since that evening they had spent together alone in the drawing-room of the cottage at Rondebosch, he had let the evil passion Violet had aroused take full possession of him. Through appealing to his lowest nature she gained her end; he became completely infatuated—demoralised—and the higher and purer love he had had for Cheeky was almost extinguished by the fiercer, brutal passion this woman, with the arts and coquettish sensualism of a born courtesan, stirred within him.

The likeness Violet had to the girl in the hospital, curiously, only served as fuel to the flame, as unconsciously he was led from association to give credit for value that did not exist.

Senior obtained a situation from Mr. Stewart in the Swab's Gulley Mine as machine-manager, at a salary of six pounds a week.

He took a small wooden cottage in Du Toits Pan Road, containing three good-sized rooms and a kitchen.

The two lived happily together for some time. Violet, mistaking for love the eager excitement caused by the pursuit in attaining her object, was under the happy delusion that she had really fallen in love with Senior. And after their marriage he was so kind, so thoughtful in many little ways for her comfort and happiness, that she got fond of him in her indolent, selfish way, as a spoilt child might do of an indulgent nurse.

His sincerity, honesty, and unaffectedness gained her respect. She felt it was nice, too, to have a husband she could look up to. But she was also conscious of a vague fear of him, for there was a quiet though indescribable air of strength, a something that, in spite of his diffidence, betokened a deep force of character, that would be irresistible should occasion arise to require it. This fear was always present; she never could get rid of it, though he always treated her with consistent gentleness and kindness. A dread that her questionable reputation might have preceded her from Cape Town, and her husband's inferior position, which she only considered as that of a mechanic—he always came home so soiled and dirty from his work—prevented her trying to know any nice, from her point of view, lady friends in Kimberley. Consequently, his company was only too welcome.

With the novelty of her position upon her she started well as a good, useful, and careful housewife. She prepared good dinners and suppers, and managed most economically. She attended auction sales, made splendid bargains, and furnished their small house cheaply, tastefully, and well. When Senior came home in the evening, they would sometimes read together, go for walks, sometimes to the theatre, or she would play and sing to him.

They were frequently pointed out by optimists as an illustration of conjugal bliss.

Senior really thought himself very lucky, and he was proud of his wife, her beauty, her accomplishments, and cleverness.

Fierce passions often turn to loathing, after satiety, but Senior's simmered down to a quiet wholesome attachment. Inconstant though he may have seemed—and who amongst

us weak human beings is constant?—his was a nature that grew fond of all around it, animate and even inanimate objects.

The sweet memory of Cheeky still existed, but it was like the memory of a loved one who had died. Though, strange enough, after he had been married more than a year, when it came to his ears that a promising young doctor was paying honourable attention to her, he was disquieted, and when afterwards he heard that she had refused his offer of marriage, firmly and conclusively, he felt more at ease.

Helen Senior kept writing and writing, praying and pleading for some word in return from her brother, and the young girl whom she had so learnt to love. But he never answered her letters, and the fear that she might find out the truth, and how he had deceived them all, frequently haunted and depressed him, and his poor sister was caused endless misery by the silence.

Within a year of the marriage a fine son was born to them, and then a change came over Violet, a decadence. Her constant fear of her husband, however, made it so gradual that he scarcely noticed it. When he suddenly realised the great difference he was dismayed and astounded. The monotony of their quiet life began to grow positively irritating to Violet. She was of an indolent pleasure-seeking nature, and she longed for excitement. She made a visit to Cape Town. For a while she was satisfied. She went to the theatre; out driving and picnicing with some of the fast officers of the Dumfries Highlanders, who had just arrived in Cape Town; and she got herself so talked about that her brother Reggie told her, and he meant it too, that if she did not return at once to Senior he would write and advise him to come and fetch her. In fear she complied, after writing a loving letter to her husband that gladdened his heart, in which she declared she could no longer stay away from him; that she yearned to be with him once more.

She was unfeignedly glad to see him again, and for a few days felt quite reconciled to the old life. Senior rejoiced that his wife loved him so much.

But soon Violet's old feeling of weariness and disgust at her uneventful existence returned, and she longed for lively companions. Through the medium of her dress-

maker, Madame Brown, she at length formed the acquaintance of several women who, though they did not move in quite the highest circles of Kimberley society, had a somewhat extensive knowledge of that classed as "of the world." They were of that racy, genial, free-and-easy sort whose society men so often prefer.

Madame Brown was a woman of about six-and-thirty, though she looked older. She was a little under the medium height, of fair florid complexion, and deeply wrinkled. She dressed showily and affected tender youthfulness. She had come out to South Africa with the Adolphus Opera Troupe at the same time as May Leslie, filling the double position of chorus hand and costumière. She, like May Leslie, had remained behind on the Diamond Fields, realising that there was the opportunity for getting a better share of this world's goods there than in any other place she had yet been to. She hired a small corrugated iron house in Du Toits Pan Road, containing three rooms in a line from the front to the back.

Over the front door was fixed a board, on which was printed in golden letters—

MADAME BROWN,
Parisian Dressmaker and Milliner.

Her name really was plain Sarah Brown, and she hailed from Putney, London, and had never even seen France, still she thought "Madame" and "Parisian" had a decided smack of tone and fashion. By tact, fawning, smiling civility, fashionable airs and pretensions, and heavy charges, "Madame," as her friends and patrons always called her, prospered. Her customers were many and varied; wives of clergymen, merchants, wholesale and retail, diamond dealers, licensed and unlicensed, actresses, barmaids, and others. There was a particular set who made of Madame's a regular social rendezvous, and met and sat in her bedroom to chat on various topics, to talk over the latest Kimberley scandal; that small but lively town generously afforded them many spicy morsels as food for gossip. They frequently refreshed themselves with whiskies and brandies with or without soda, and many of them even indulged in cigarette smoking.

The chief among the members of this set were: Mrs.

Obediah, the wife of an English Church clergyman, of age about thirty, fast and flighty, dark and thin, with rather a pretty face, who did not acknowledge the other members of the set outside Madame Brown's, which slight was not resented, however, for it was allowed that a clergyman's wife had to mind her "p's" and "q's." This lady was credited with being partial to flirtations with exceedingly young men; Mrs. Riter, a drunken journalist's wife, fat, forty, but neither fair nor dark, who affected juvenility; Mrs. Getit, late of the "New Dug Out," now proprietress of the "Diamond Fields Hotel," the largest and most fashionable establishment of the kind on the Fields. This lady was voted by the other members capital company. Many were the hearty laughs she gave them, such a good hand as she was at telling stories. May Leslie, called, and believed to be, Mrs. Searight, and respected and feared by the others; a lady who called herself Mrs. Benson, and who tried to pass as the wife of Mr. Benson, a wealthy town councillor, though nobody believed for a moment that she was. She had only lately arrived with Mr. Benson on that individual's return from a pleasure trip home to England. She was a very pretty little golden-haired blonde, with a trim neat figure, full of life, fun and frolic, a general favourite and one of Madame's best customers; Mrs. Gonnivarsen, dark and of large oriental features, loud of dress and loud of voice, whose husband was a diamond-buyer, licensed, but suspected of also engaging in the illicit trade; and then the latest addition to the set, Mrs. Senior, who was looked upon with no little respect by most of them as having once mixed in the best of Cape society, but who had made a *mésalliance* in marrying Mr. Senior, a man who worked in the mines.

Violet, who felt that if she could not get into the best set in Kimberley, she would rather not get into any, gradually found her way into this one. Soon the uncomfortable feeling she experienced at first in mixing with those she considered her inferiors wore off—was not Mrs. Obediah doing the same?—and she got to feel at home. The racy conversation and the scandal about the ladies,—whom she affected to look down upon, and to consider as not worth associating with,—just suited her. The fact of being looked up to as rather a swell also flattered her

vanity. But the greatest attraction of all was a new excitement she found; that produced by drinking spirits, a habit to which, too, the sense of forbidden fruit added a sweet guilty charm.

Senior now frequently found his wife absent when he came home for his meals, and the cooking left to the kitchen Kaffir. He missed Violet much on these occasions, but he was good-tempered over this neglect. "Poor girl," he said to himself, "I cannot expect her to be always at home, her life is slow enough, and now she has succeeded in making a few friends, naturally she will be asked out."

The only one of the set at Madame's whom Violet mentioned to her husband was Mrs. Obediah; she told him she was trying to steady this lady, who was a woman full of animal spirits, entirely harmless, but from a disregard of conventional rules had got herself talked about. But she invented friends, all of whom were, she made out, highly respectable. Senior had every confidence in his wife, and being shy and modest did not regret, though he sometimes wondered, that her friends were not invited to the house. But he found a constant companion in his little son, Harry, whom he had called after his brother Henry. He was a fine sturdy child, full of eager, restless life. One of those accidents of nature, born full of goodness and generosity, he had inherited all the best of his father, and missed all the selfish shallowness of his mother.

Violet was as fond of her son as she could be in her selfish way, and proud of him, too, always boring her friends at Madame's with accounts of his precocity and general goodness. But the mother's fondness was like that of a child of its doll; she felt fond of her son when she was inclined to be amused by him. Harry liked his mother, but his father much better, who, full of ideas of the proper way to bring up a child, paid great attention to him. The child was never to be beaten, he was to be treated with uniform kindness, to be taught to love good for good's sake. He used to invent and tell Harry stories in which he tried to stir, by emulation, a love of truth, generosity, and pluck. And he was successful, the little chap was always trying to imitate the heroes of his father's stories.

The little son often accompanied his father to the mine,

and would spend the whole day there, troubling no one; riding by the side of the driver on the trucks that conveyed the diamondiferous soil to the floors; playing at sinking shafts and mining generally. He was known to all the workmen as "Old Senior." Early he showed signs of inheriting his father's physical prowess.

One day some of the workmen for fun tried to egg him on to hit the four-year-old son of a coloured truck-driver, who had come down with his father that day. "Old Senior," who was not quite three years of age, refused point blank. "No, I won't," he said, "if he 'tike me first den I fight."

So then they coaxed the little ducky to assume the offensive, and as soon as "Old Senior" received the other's attack he rushed in, and with blows phenomenally straight and hard, and amidst much laughter and amusement from the spectators, soon polished off his sable antagonist. And when little ducky began to cry and showed unmistakable signs of having had enough by lying down on the ground and crying, "Old Senior" advanced and stood over him and said, "'Oo had 'nuff, eh? 'oo had 'nuff, eh? den dit up and sake hands," and he extended his hand to the other like the little man he was. He had been acting the part of "Willie," the principal hero of his father's tales to him.

The story was told all over the "Fields," and "Old Senior," the infant son of the fellow who had made himself famous by thrashing Dooley so quickly, became a public character from that day. But just after he reached his third year he got an attack of bronchitis, brought on by a cold which his mother had neglected. And through her carelessness in nursing, too, the bronchitis took the form of an acute attack, and poor little Harry hovered between life and death.

But the child had an indomitable spirit. When he was so weak that he could not even move his head on the pillow, a bright smile would light up his face when his father, arriving from his work, would come and lie down beside him to keep the little chap company, and Harry would crow, though feebly, with delight.

Senior could not help being cognisant of the mother's negligence, and he felt sad and depressed over it. A vague feeling of disappointment, of dissatisfaction, took

possession of him. He loved his wife, in spite of her falling off, better than ever. But she was a puzzle to him, and a puzzle he was afraid to try and unravel. And the warmth of her embraces, the heat of her kisses, misled him into the belief that she fondly cared for him. He mistook for passionate love this the frothy outcome of the ardent sensualist, who possessed nothing of the true sentiment of affection.

This belief, this certainty that his wife loved him, gave him comfort and hope amidst all his vexing thoughts regarding her. "All would yet come right," he said to himself; "for if a woman really loves a man," he argued, "in time he should be able to do anything with her." He persevered patiently, always kind and loving, never nagging, trying more to impress her by adopting himself a high moral tone.

Violet, with her superficial sentimentality, often felt ashamed when he spoke mildly to her about some omission, some disregard of wifely duty, or, what pained him most, neglect of the boy; she was always penitent, acknowledged her wrong, promised amendment, and sometimes would even turn over a new leaf for a few weeks at a time. His heart would brighten then with the delusive hope that the change for the better was going to be lasting; but soon she would weary of her good behaviour and lapse back into the old ways, only worse each time, as a man addicted to drink will break out after a spell of enforced abstinence. Added to her other follies now was a laxity and extravagance in her household management. His income was, with Mr. Cumming's legacy and his salary from the Swab's Gulley Mine added, £50 a month, and as they lived unpretentiously and did no entertaining, it was, he thought, quite a munificent sum, but he found they were hardly coming out on it.

And Senior now often thought of the little waif who, born and brought up amidst vice, had been so persevering, so anxious to do the right. The remembrance of her even brought to him a sweet sadness. He tried hard not to make comparisons, but thoughts would enter and rule his mind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LITTLE over three years after Senior had been employed by the Swab's Gulley Mining Company it was amalgamated with the neighbouring and larger company of De Beers, and he, with several more employés, was discharged in consequence.

He was now well known, and expected, before long, to get another situation. If Violet would only try and economise a little in the meantime, it would be all right; but they were running into debt, and that he abhorred.

Then, to add to his trouble, Harry had a relapse, brought on through the Kaffir boy putting him to bed in a night-shirt not properly aired.

Senior became very angry. The mother's neglect caused him to lose his temper for the first time.

"Damn it all!" he said, "you should look after the youngster yourself. He is only a little over three years. Good God! it is murder to leave the kid to the care of Kaffirs. Dr. Muir said he would have been cured long ago if anything like decent care had been taken of him."

Never had her husband spoken like this to her before, and Violet's fear was mixed with anger as she replied, "Oh, of course, I am always to blame! Am I always to be stuck in the house looking after a child? I am sure I have little enough pleasure as it is. Why don't you get a nurse for him?"

"A nurse? Well, you know as well as I that you could have had a nurse if you had liked. I am sure you have had money enough to have paid half a dozen nurses. You tell me that your mother managed on something less than £20 a month, and there were three grown-up people to clothe and feed; well, you have not been able to manage on more than twice that."

"That is it! throw up my people's poverty in my face as usual. That is the sort of thing a gentleman ought to do. Anyhow, I moved in good society then." And Violet tossed her head and then sighed.

"Violet," said he, "how can you be so unjust? I never meant, as you very well know, to throw up your people's poverty, as you call it. I—— But, look here, don't let us get angry. Perhaps I was rather abrupt.

You see, I am so anxious about the kid. Violet, dearest, do let us look after him better! What should we do if we lost him? We should never forgive ourselves, should we?" And then he went forward and kissed her, as she was attending to the child.

Violet, trembling from the effects of the little passage at arms, suddenly burst into tears when she heard the kindly words, and exclaimed, "Oh, why are you so cruel, Jack? I do love my child, I don't care what anybody says."

"Yes, I know you do, Violet. Nobody ever said you did not. Kiss me, dearest; I am sure I did not mean to be unkind." And Violet put her arms around his neck and kissed him, and then dried her tears as she thought, "I am just full of feeling; a few kind words have such an effect that the tears come at once."

Senior felt irritated as he thought, "And I used to think she had so much sense—more than any woman I ever met. Ah! I would not give——" Then he tried to check himself, but the thought rebelliously finished itself in silence.

Poor little Harry was getting rapidly worse. Senior said to Violet the doctor must be sent for immediately, and she replied that she had better go, as the child was so fond of his father, and he could amuse him so well in the meantime by telling him one of his stories.

Harry, who was crying, brightened up at the idea, and smiling through his tears, said, "Yes, fadder, 'oo stay and tell me a story; dat one 'bout Willie, when he hammer the boy twice his size for beating his lickle sister."

Senior said, "All right, sonny," and then, turning to Violet, asked her to "hurry up."

Violet, glad of getting out of attending to the child, if only for a few minutes, went to fetch Dr. Muir, who lived in Du Toits Pan Road, close to a large circus building lately erected. He was in and promised to come at once.

Violet did not wait for him, but hurried back, fully convinced she was going straight home—did not know why she did not wait for the doctor to accompany her, but when she came opposite to Madame Brown's she could not resist the temptation of looking in, just to tell the dressmaker of Harry's illness—nothing else.

After being admitted, and finding herself in the room

where were also present Mrs. Riter, Mrs. Benson, and May Leslie, she sat down and mechanically, as it were, took the glass of brandy Madame poured out for her and put into her hand, extending the while the most civil greetings. "She had only come to look in for a couple of minutes," she said; and then she told them of Harry's relapse, and of how she had been for the doctor.

Sympathy was expressed by all except May Leslie, who disliked Mrs. Senior, and openly showed it; in consequence of which the latter was gushing and toadying to her.

Mrs. Riter, who had three children of her own, offered to give her a valuable recipe for some wonderful cure for bronchitis an old Dutch woman, the wife of a Boer, had given her.

Then they continued the subject of the conversation which Violet had interrupted, the discussion of the drama *The Silver King*, which a dramatic company, styled the "Diplomacy Troupe," lately arrived, had produced. It had been enjoying an unusually lengthy run.

May Leslie thought the piece good, but badly acted, and as she had been on the stage herself her opinion on theatrical matters carried great weight.

Then Mrs. Riter quoted her husband the journalist's criticism.

"I hate the piece," said Mrs. Benson. "It is so sad. When I go to the theatre I like to laugh, not to cry. Ah, one ought to make the most of life, for it is very short, and you are dead a long time." And then she laughed merrily at her own joke.

Violet joined in: "Oh! I do not agree with you, Mrs. Benson. A laugh does one good sometimes certainly, but so does a good cry. We cannot always be merry, and it is a good thing to cultivate one's sympathy so that one can feel and sorrow for those who are in need of it. I felt so sad when I saw *The Silver King* last Friday that I cried. You know where Mrs. Denver's child is dying, and they are going to put her out of the house; so heartrending! But I would not have missed it for the world, for I felt a better woman afterwards."

May Leslie gave a significant "Hm!" Mrs. Benson said nothing, she was a little afraid of arguing with Mrs. Senior, because she felt the other was so superior to her in education. Madame Brown had not altogether retired

from "the profession"; whenever an opera troupe arrived on the Fields her services were available to assist in the chorus or small parts, though they had to be very small, as she could not really act, nor could she sing a note; but she had one great attraction, from a showman's point of view in Kimberley—that was the possession of an enormous pair of legs, of which she was justly very proud. And she felt a resentment against this dramatic company that did not want her colossal limbs.

"Ah," she said, "they are a miserable scratch lot, that would not be tolerated in third-class provincial theatres at home. I should just like to see them put on burlesque. There is not one of them could show decently in tights. They are nearly all my customers, the ladies, you know, so I can tell. They have all miserable figures. By-the-by, what did you think of that dress Alice Norton wore in the third act—she plays, you know, Mrs. Denver—that lavender surah, covered with cream lace; quite plain, you know, she wanted it plain, but did it not fit her well?"

Approval was expressed by all of the perfect fit of this dress, and then Madame Brown went on to the subject nearest her heart (in a figurative sense), "legs." She related several anecdotes, in which it appeared that some of the nobility, even Princes of the Blood, had expressed admiration of her proportions.

Brandies-and-sodas now followed, and the conversation continued on legs and women's figures generally. Mrs. Benson, who was a plump, well-made little thing, offered to bet Mrs. Senior a dozen pairs of gloves she could not give her an inch round the calf. The bet was accepted, and Madame produced the tape and measured them, Mrs. Benson winning amidst some little excitement. The little blonde was in great glee when the verdict was given in her favour. She cried, "I knew I would surprise you;" and picking up her skirts round her knees, she began to dance some sort of a fantastic step, accompanying herself the while by singing a lively French air. And so well and skilfully did she toss her pretty feet about that May Leslie remarked, "'Tis not the first time you have danced, my lady! You are no amateur at the business!"

All the other ladies laughed and clapped their hands, and Mrs. Riter said, admiringly, "You little devil, you!"

At last, getting out of breath, she sank down full-length on the sofa, saying, "What bad condition I am in!"

Madame now went and fetched a packet of "camp" cigarettes, and handed them around. All the ladies began to smoke, excepting Violet and Mrs. Riter, who said she had often tried, but it always made her ill. Mrs. Benson again provoked the attention and admiration of the company by her saucy, piquant manner—the way she inhaled and then sent the smoke curling out of her delicate nostrils.

The latest scandal was then introduced, concerning a young Doctor Snook, who had a Don Juan reputation.

Mrs. Riter said, "I can't for the world understand what women can see in him. He is short, stumpy and ugly. I could not fancy him, not if there were not another man in the world."

"It is his manner," broke in Madame. "I have been told," she went on, assuming an air of great importance, "by some of the first ladies of Kimberley, that when you come to know him he is quite fascinating."

"By heavens!" said May Leslie, "if he tried any of his nonsense on with me, I would teach him a lesson he would not forget in a hurry." And her eyes flashed; she had now arrived at that stage which Searight dreaded.

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Madame with emphasis.

"Well, you know, he attends me," said Mrs. Benson, "and I find him very nice. He is so attentive, and he seems to sympathise with you so. Oh, I think he is charming. Of course, I feel I have to keep him at a distance. But he is very amusing sometimes." And then she laughed merrily, evidently at some humorous reminiscence in connection with the amorous medico.

"My husband would be the one to catch him at any of his little tricks," said Violet, who had at that moment decided to call in this young doctor the next time she required medical advice. "And he is so strong and such a good boxer, he would kill him with one blow."

"Ah, yes, indeed!" said Madame, assentingly.

"Oh, your husband is no doubt a wonder, but I hate him; I think he is a prig," said May Leslie.

"My husband is a gentleman," returned Violet, to whom the brandy had given artificial courage.

"Well, and so is mine," said May Leslie, with angry

looks, as if she thought the other had implied an insinuation.

"Well, I never said he was not, I am sure," said the other deprecatingly. "But it is not good taste, to say the least of it, to run down one's husband before one."

"Better to do so before your face than behind your back."

Violet, who was a terribly timid and nervous woman at heart, turned pale as she noticed the other's flashing eyes and angry face. "Oh! I am sure, Madame, I never meant, I never meant ——" and then she stopped in her fear for loss of words to express herself.

Madame Brown, somewhat alarmed, as Violet was a good customer, came to her aid and said, "Mrs. Searight, you should not hurt Mrs. Senior's feelings; it is not right, though I am sure you did not mean it. Did you, dear?"

May Leslie, looking very grim, never answered.

Then Violet burst into tears and sobbed as if heart-broken.

Mrs. Benson, who was a kind-hearted little creature, immediately seated herself by the side of the weeping woman, and putting her arms around her, kissed her, between her inhalations of her cigarette, and tried to soothe her. "Poor Mrs. Senior," she went on, "don't cry. Mrs. Searight did not mean what she said, I am sure. Your husband is a nice man, and—and he has a very good figure, you know."

Mrs. Riter seemed expectant, as if looking forward to a row, and being a witness to the washing of soiled linen.

May Leslie appeared quite indifferent, and said to Mrs. Benson—who kept on repeating, "Your husband is a good man"—"Oh, leave her alone."

Then Violet, half through fear of May Leslie, half with a drunken maudlin desire to gain sympathy, began to run her husband down. "He is not a good man," she gasped out between her sobs. "You have no idea of the life he leads me. He swears at me, beats me, makes my life a perfect misery. He married me under false pretences. He pretended that he had come into a fortune, and after he had spent the two thousand pounds my father left me, he took a position as a working man in the mines. And I was brought up in the best society. I have to live—live—

in a—a—a small wooden hut," and she continued sobbing as Mrs. Benson tried to pacify her.

Madame and Mrs. Riter then began to talk against men generally. "Ah! the majority of them were brutes."

"And how quiet he looks," went on Madame; "why, you would not think he could say 'boo' to a goose. It is always the quiet ones that are the slyest. 'Still waters run deep.'"

May Leslie's thoughts had suddenly turned on Searight, and she was filled with jealous fears. She rose to go in quest of him. She turned her eyes on the weeping wife as she held the handle to open the door, and she felt a strong disgust, a loathing for her, for she knew that this woman was lying. Much as she disliked Senior, her sense of justice told her that he would never condescend to do what his wife had accused him of. Her aversion to him was akin even to respect, for was it not his moral superiority to Searight that principally stimulated it?

She looked at Violet for a few minutes in silence, and the latter trembled with fear. At last she spoke. "Look here, you are the biggest liar I ever met. I don't like your husband, but he is a deal too good for you. You come here and tell us of your boy being so ill, you are so alarmed, with all your fine talk. Who is looking after him now, while you are here gossiping and drinking? I would like to know who but this brutal husband you tell lies about! I hate women who run their husbands down. And as for you, you dirty rubbish! Faugh!" And with a parting scowl she left, slamming the door behind her; for she was in great doubts and fears about Searight.

Then a painful silence fell upon those in the room, for they were conscious that May Leslie had spoken the truth.

Mrs. Benson ceased trying to soothe Violet, whose sobs now had a peculiar forced sound about them.

Then Madame, with thoughts relating to business matters, being afraid of losing Mrs. Senior's custom by what had occurred, hastened to fill the part of comforter. "Never mind, my dear Mrs. Senior, don't pay any attention to what Mrs. Searight said;" and sinking her voice into a whisper, which, however, was meant to be heard by all in the room, "she has been drinking, you know, and she is always like that then."

"I am sure I never did any harm to her," sobbed out Violet.

Madame discreetly proposed another drink, and filling the empty glasses, the ladies drank, Violet also. Mrs. Benson said, "My, I'll be getting tight if I don't watch it." Though to tell the truth, she showed not the least signs of the many libations she had taken.

The brandy seemed to help Violet to regain her lost equanimity, and she dried her tears. The conversation was beginning again, when a knock came to the door, and upon Madame opening it she saw Searight. He had called on his way home to see if his wife was there. Madame invited him inside, and asked him if he would take something to drink.

He complied: "Thanks, don't mind if I do; a little whisky-and-soda, if you have it handy, but don't trouble, you know."

Searight knew the ladies, excepting Mrs. Senior, to whom he was now introduced. He looked at her intently from time to time, taking in her points, as he did every woman he met. He was attracted. She, in turn, was much impressed by him; good looks were everything to her; she thought Searight a fine, handsome, well-dressed fellow, ever so much better-looking than her husband. The languid way he drawled when he spoke, the aristocratic, easy manner he adopted for her edification, stamped him in her eyes a man of high breeding. Comparing him with her husband suddenly put her in mind of her sick child, and what excuse she could possibly invent for staying so long away.

"Oh, I must go home now," she said, starting up. "My husband will kill——" and then she stopped and looked at Searight in some confusion.

"Are you not afraid to go home alone?" asked Madame. "You know there was a married couple robbed in Du Toits Pan Road by two men with blackened faces, when they were going home from the theatre the other night."

"Oh, Madame, what shall I do? Can't you send your Kaffir boy with me," asked Violet, who looked at Searight as she spoke, feeling genuinely alarmed.

"If you—aw—will kindly allow me, Mrs. Senior, I shall be—aw—happy to see you home," said he. "Do you live far from heah?"

"No, just a little way; our house is close to the hospital. Thank you so much! so kind of you!"

Drink always made Violet voluble and fluent in speech and familiar in manner; as they walked along she talked away at a great rate. Searight felt that he was getting on splendidly as he looked down into her face as she held his arm, and he adopted his softest, most insinuating voice.

When they had come within fifty yards of the house he stopped, saying, "By Jove, Mrs. Senior, I had better say good-night to you heah, don't you know. You see your good husband and I had a few words some yeahs ago, and" (he laughed carelessly) "we have never spoken since."

"That is why," said Violet, "your wife hates me, I suppose; and because I told her to-night at Madame Brown's that my husband was often rough and cruel to me, she called me a liar." And she looked very much like commencing to sob afresh.

"Poor girl!" said Searight, "dem shame! I can't understand how fellows can be such brutes. But you must not pay any attention to what my missus says, I expect she was 'on'; you know, she drinks like a fish, and I, ah, have a lively time of it sometimes, I can tell you. By gad! we both of us seem to be unlucky, don't ye know."

"Oh, Mr. Searight, perhaps I should not say so, but since you have given me your confidence, I must tell you that my husband is a perfect brute. I often think of running away from him." And Violet began to whimper.

"Poor girl! dem shame! by gad! dem shame!"

"But I must be getting home," continued she, "or he will kill me. Good night," and she held out her hand.

"Ah, good night," he said, as he took it. "Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you? Sorry Senior and I don't speak, or else I might call, don't ye know. Could I see you soon again?"

"Yes," she said very softly.

"When?"

"I don't know," in a whisper.

"Say to-morrow evening at seven—no—say a quarter to eight, at the entrance of the park."

"Very well, I'll try to be there; if I am not, something will have detained me; then I will come the following night at the same time."

"All right," he said, still retaining her hand.

"Good night," she said again, as she looked at him shyly but invitingly.

"Good night," he returned, and by instinct knowing that she would not only allow, but like it, he bent forward and kissed her on the lips.

"Oh, Mr. Searight, you shouldn't," she said, and then she muttered something that sounded like "my husband," and after giving him a reproving coquettish look she turned and walked towards the house.

Searight lifted his hat and then went in the opposite direction. "She is all right," he said to himself, "I'll pay you out, Mr. Jack Senior, I'll teach you a trick for insulting a gentleman!" and he threw out his chest, and strutted in his walk, as he thought what a devil of a chap he was with the girls, and that it was not to be wondered at either, for, no doubt about it, he had a fetching way with him that they could not resist.

"Where have you been, Violet?" asked Senior, when his wife entered, and she noted that there was a quiet anger in his voice.

"Oh, Jack, dear, I have had such a fright! When I was coming back, hurrying to get home as fast as I could—I would not even wait for Dr. Muir, though he asked me to—two men followed me, and I walked as fast as I could, and when they came closer I saw their faces were blackened, and I ran wildly, and then they ran too, and just as they were ten yards behind me, I got up to Madame Brown's, and commenced shouting and hammering at the door, and the two men bolted. When the door was opened, I fainted. Just feel how I am trembling still;" and she placed her hand on his, and it was shaking like a leaf, from the fear she was in of him.

Senior, by the way he questioned her, evidently was not entirely free from suspicion as to the veracity of her story. But Violet stuck bravely to her tale, until he felt convinced that it was true.

"But" (sniffing with alarmed face) "you have been drinking brandy, surely? You have quite a strong smell of it, and your eyes look queer."

"Oh, yes, Jack, I fainted, you know, and they poured the horrid stuff down my throat until they made me nearly choke."

Frequently of late Senior had noticed what seemed to

be the effects of drink upon his wife, but on each occasion she had cunningly, before he had time to make any remark about it, hastened to explain that she had been calling on some lady-friend and had been persuaded just to take one glass of wine. The least thing went to her head, she said; she hated it, and had only taken it because she thought it looked so childish not to be able to drink a glass of wine like other people.

He had each time pointed out the folly of this, and that there were hundreds and thousands of people who did not take any kind of intoxicating drink, for he was in mortal dread of the effects it often had upon women, having strong upon him the remembrance of a sweet, charming cousin who had been ruined morally and physically by a craving for strong drink that owed its origin to the prescribing of brandy by her medical adviser during an illness.

Violet, after she had taken off her hat, went to Harry's cot. She felt gushing over with a maudlin, motherly love, and was going to pick him up and press him to her breast, when her husband caught her by the arm, and said, "Hush! don't wake him. Dr. Muir says he has to be left to sleep as long as he can."

"Really, Violet," he went on, "you must attend most carefully to him in future. He has been so bad since you went out, I felt quite frightened. I sent Sixpence to see if he could find you. I thought it so curious you did not return, seeing how ill the youngster was. I had no idea you would be at Madame Brown's. And oh! please, Violet"—his voice trembled a little now—"I hope you won't take any kind of drink, no matter if you are almost dying: often the cure is worse than the disease; you know, there never has been a woman known who took a liking for drink who was ever cured; your nerves are so much more sensitive, more highly strung than ours: once it catches hold it seizes like a vice. It is all the more dangerous to nervous women too."

Violet began to cry: she always shed tears so easily that when under the influence of alcohol they would pour forth often without the slightest provocation.

"Oh, Jack," she said, "you know I hate it, and I'll promise never to touch it—no, not if I am dying! Kiss me, dearest, for I do love you!"

Senior kissed her, but rather coldly.

And Violet threw her arms around him, and kissing him again and again, thought of Searight—who had so recently kissed her—and of the engagement she had made to meet him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HARRY's relapse, though sudden and severe, did not last long. The father, being out of employment, was able to give all his attention to the child, and see that he was properly nursed, and the youngster himself had such marvellous vitality.

Violet kept her appointment with Searight. She went out in the afternoon to buy a few groceries, and when she came back she made out to her husband that she had just received news of the serious illness of a lady-friend, Mrs. Johnstone, who was very anxious to see her for a short time during the evening.

"So unfortunate," she said, "that she should fall ill and want to see me when poor Harry is unwell too, but I suppose I must go and see what she wants, only I'll take good care I won't stay longer than a few minutes. No; 'Charity begins at home.'"

Senior said nothing, but he was not quite satisfied.

She left at half-past seven, promising to be back in less than half an hour, but she did not return until nearly eleven, and when she appeared she was much excited. She told her husband a long story about her friend's illness, but, as usual when telling a tale of fiction, she paid far too much attention to details, thereby raising doubts and making her husband wonder, if this sick-friend story were false, where his wife had been. But he never questioned her faithfulness; no, with all her faults, she loved him, he thought, too well for that. And now, on her return this night, her demonstrations of love, which were so frequent, seemed more ardent than usual.

But this sick friend's illness continued, and Violet frequently went to see her. It was very uncertain whether Mrs. Johnstone would pull through or not, she informed her husband.

One Sunday evening, after she had gone to see the invalid, Leonard called and asked Senior if he would come out for a walk.

"I don't like to leave the kid alone, man," the other answered. "You see, his mother has gone to see a sick friend. But, hold on, I'll see if the young beggar is asleep."

Harry was slumbering soundly. Senior called in Sixpence, the Kaffir boy, and told him to stay in the bedroom until he came back, and then he and Leonard went out. Senior proposed a stroll to the Reservoir, which was only a short distance, as he did not like to be too long away.

When returning they passed through Lennox Street. The night was dark and windy, every now and then a rainy squall swept over the town.

As they approached May Leslie's cottage they heard angry voices.

On the opposite side of the road was a dark figure of a man in a heavy-looking ulster, standing close to the wall of a small garden.

Just as they were going to pass the cottage they observed Searight standing over May Leslie on the stoep in a threatening attitude. Senior and Leonard stopped, though unobserved by the others. "Yes," he was saying, "you went for me last night because you were drunk and I was sober, and I had to put up with it, and now because I ask you for a paltry quid you refuse it. Here" (extending his hand), "give it me, or, by gosh! I'll knock it out of you."

"Charlie," returned May Leslie supplicatingly, "I only have half-a-crown on me. Don't, dearest, be so cruel. I gave you all the money I had this morning—a fiver. I forgot to bring the cashbox home with me from the bar last night. I was not quite sober, or I would not have forgotten it, and I would not have behaved as I did to you last night. Please, Charlie, forgive me."

"You lie, you lie, I'll teach you to sling plates at me again. Take that!" and then he struck her with his fist on the mouth, cutting and making it bleed. He was going to strike her again, when Senior jumped on the stoep, and with his left hand hit him a blow on the side of the head that sent him reeling against the wall of the house.

"You cur!" he said, and he approached with the evident

intention of administering more punishment, when May Leslie stepped between them, and, throwing her arms around Senior, exclaimed, in excited, angry tones, "How dare you! How dare you!"

Searight made a bolt off the stoep, and then facing round, said, "You beastly cad! I'll have you arrested! I'll go for a policeman!" Then he turned and ran down the street.

The dark figure on the other side walked quickly in the direction he had taken.

May Leslie then made at Senior's face with her fingers, but he kept her off, and Leonard, taking him by the arm, dragged him away.

"Yes, you ugly brute!" screamed May Leslie after him; "you had better clear out before I lay my hands on you. Go and look after your own wife, the lying, drunken beast she is! and it will take you all your time. You beastly bully, you! You think because you can use your fists a bit you can hit anybody you like. Go home, you cur! Look after your own wife, and don't interfere between others. Everybody knows she is the biggest drunkard and the greatest liar in the place, with all the fine airs she puts on, and the good society she brags about having mixed in until she married you—who are so much beneath her—through your deceiving her, and pretending you had come into a fortune, when all you wanted was to get a hold of the £2,000 her father left her. Ah! she told us all about it at Madame Brown's the other night. I believe her now when she said you swore at her, and knocked her about; yes, though she is such a liar, I believe her. Go home! Go home, I tell you!" But at length Senior and Leonard, by walking quickly, got out of reach of her voice.

Leonard felt awkward and pained, on account of his friend, at May Leslie's denouncing his wife. He had never been able to make out how it was that Senior could have so quickly married after his affair with the little ex-barmaid. Probably determination not to marry and to turn nurse was only the passing fancy of a young girl seized with religious mania. He wondered how Senior, whom he had believed so constant, could have so quickly learnt to forget the one and love the other. Mrs. Senior had greatly prepossessed Leonard at first, as she did nearly everyone,

and he had congratulated his friend, thinking the while how oddly everything had turned out. A low-bred little girl, though she had been living with the man, actually refused to marry a gentleman by birth. Then, instead of giving her time to change her mind, which very probably she would have done, he marries a beautiful young lady, most accomplished and clever, thereby effectually preventing any chance of making an ass of himself by marrying a girl so much beneath him.

But Mrs. Senior had, in time, lost his good opinion ; Leonard even decided that his friend would have done better had he married Cheeky. For he knew that Mrs. Senior was looked upon as a worthless woman, who associated with ladies of questionable reputation, and that her name of late had been coupled in the most disgraceful way with that low brute Searight. And besides these scandalous rumours he was inclined to condemn her. Did she not neglect her husband, home, and child ? A bad mother was bound to be a bad woman. But Leonard never said a word to Senior. What man ever tells a friend what he hears or knows about his wife ? The last to hear anything is always the husband. Many are there considering other men blind fools, who live themselves, perhaps, victims of still baser faithlessness. It is a question if it would not be the kindest and most friendly action to make known to the man still young in years, whose wife is betraying his honour, the dreadful fact, and thus prevent the terrible consequences of a later discovery in older age, when the woman has so grown upon his life that a separation would mean worse than death, and yet future life with her a torturing misery.

Leonard felt that the other would probably expect him to make some remark about what May Leslie had said, to ridicule or deprecate her accusations ; but, being only too glad that Senior should get any hint of his wife's unworthiness, he said nothing. Feeling, however, continued silence awkward, he hazarded a few remarks about the advisability of interfering between man and wife.

"It is always the way," he said ; "the woman takes her husband's part. But it is rather a fine trait in woman's character, is it not ?"

Senior did not seem inclined to discuss the matter. "More vanity than anything else," he said sententiously. "She thinks it reflects upon herself that the man she has

thought good enough to marry should be treated like a dog by anyone thrashing him. In nine cases out of ten she would only be too glad if the brute died."

At the house Senior said "Good night" in a curt way, as if a little offended with his friend. He went into the bedroom and asked Sixpence if the "missus" had come home yet.

"Nay, baas," the Kaffir replied.

"You can clear now," and he threw himself down on the bed on which Harry was peacefully sleeping. He was a little comforted at being close to his little son, who he felt was so brave, loving, and true that his very sleeping presence seemed to sympathise with him now; for the words May Leslie had spoken had sunk deep down into his heart, and he felt sorely troubled. His love, which had grown so strong for his wife, tried to console him by whispering, "They were only the meaningless words spoken by an angry woman. Violet could never have said such things, of course she could not, it is even ridiculous to think of."

But then something else within him, which had apparently noted but too carefully all her lies and the many inconsistencies with what he wished to believe her to be, took up the other side, and, with irritating system, checked them off and called his attention to them.

"Would it be at all likely for May Leslie to have invented what she said on the spur of the moment, without there being any truth in it? Might not Violet, after having had a glass of wine—you know how it goes to her head—have told just such a story for the sake of gaining sympathy? You know how fond of effect she is, and what a liar she is, too, and so does May Leslie evidently. Ah! there is more in it than you would like to believe."

"Pooh! pooh!" replied the first voice. "She loves me too much, is too proud of me to ever want to make me appear such a brute. I tell you it is impossible! Why it is doing her an injustice even to question such a thing for a moment! And to say she is a drunkard—the biggest drunkard in Kimberley! What vile exaggeration!"

"Exaggeration, no doubt," said the second voice, "but might she not be a drunkard? Have you not often seen the indications of this yourself?"

"Oh, nonsense! Why a glass of wine goes to her head. She says so herself."

"Yes, that is just it. She says so, but can you believe her? And you are often away, often working all night. What splendid opportunities to indulge in tipping! What has she done with all the money she has spent? Come, now! And if a woman drinks, what won't she do? She very soon loses self-respect, virtue, and everything else."

"Oh, by Heaven! she is not that sort of woman; don't hint such a thing. She loves me passionately—passionately, I tell you!"

"Not if she talks about you as May Leslie says she does."

"But I don't believe it."

"So you pretend. Look, too, how silent Leonard was; he never offered to say one word when he heard your wife so spoken of. Ah! depend upon it he, too, knows more than he would like to tell you."

And so it went on, the two voices torturing and nearly driving him mad with their ceaseless chatter. He tried to stop them, but they forced him to listen, and in great agony he exclaimed from time to time,

"It can't be true! I won't believe it!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE dark figure in the ulster hurried after Searight, who made straight to the entrance of the park, and then struck off to the right and followed along the hedge that skirted it, until he came to the top corner. A woman, thickly veiled and heavily coated, came out of the shade, and after shaking hands with him, and hurriedly exchanging a few words, left him, and proceeded in the direction of the Kimberley Mine. After she had gone on about one hundred yards, Searight followed, keeping that distance between them.

The dark figure remained close to the hedge until both had passed, and then went after them in a quiet stealthy manner, like a poacher stalking game.

When the woman reached the mine she turned to her left, crossed Du Toits Pan Road, and went in the direction of Newtown, Searight also and the dark figure still dogging the footsteps of both. The last, when reaching Du Toits Pan Road, hailed a Cape cart. "Follow closely after me," he whispered to the driver.

At length the woman knocked at the door of a small iron house built in the shape of a lean-to. It was opened by a big, stout female, with exaggerated negress features, and dressed in Malay garb. The thickly-veiled woman passed in. Then Searight came. He likewise knocked, and was admitted. Then the dark figure softly approached and gave a low whistle. The black woman in the Malay dress came out, and quietly shutting the door behind her, crossed over to the other side of the street where he stood.

"Is it all right?" the latter asked.

"Yes," returned the other. "Look sharp; but if they want to go too soon, I'll try and find some way of detaining them."

"Yes, that's the idea. I am off; I have a cab here, so I won't be long."

The dark figure then jumped into the cab.

"Drive as quick as you can!"

In a short time the cab arrived at May Leslie's cottage. The dark figure jumped down and knocked at the door loudly and sharply.

"Who is that?" inquired May, throwing the door open. "Oh, it's you, Foxnisky! come in."

Rapidly the detective told her what he had just seen.

May Leslie put her hand to her side and gave a deep gasp, but never spoke; she seemed dazed, and stood quite motionless.

"Come, be quick!" Foxnisky said, "come and satisfy yourself; I have a cab at the door. Surely it's time you came to your senses and stopped wasting your life on such a brute as that."

"Oh, yes! but I feel so faint, I must have some brandy; I feel so faint." And May Leslie's voice sounded strange and far away. "I must take a little drop to give me strength."

She passed inside, poured out a glass of brandy, and drank it off; then went into her bedroom, and from the

top drawer of a chest of drawers she took a revolver and put it in her pocket. She came out with only a shawl round her head.

"I am ready now," she said, and her voice seemed stronger.

"All right," hurriedly replied the detective, "jump you in first."

She climbed up into the cart and sat down, and the man followed.

"Same place again, only drive quietly," he said to the driver.

He took hold of her disengaged hand and stroked and patted it as if to soothe her. Well he knew what a storm there must be raging in the heart of this woman, who had received his tidings so quietly. How different he felt! At last the picture he had been constantly conjuring up in his mind for years had every chance of being realised. His opportunity had come at last; he would cry quits with the man for whom he had been sacrificed and made a simple tool of by this woman. Revenge and love were a sweet mixture to him at this moment.

But what was this he felt against his leg in May Leslie's pocket?

He let her hand go and grabbed it.

She grasped his wrist.

"Stop, driver, stop!" he exclaimed, and the driver drew in his horses.

"Here, May! this won't do! do you want to spoil everything? Do you want to get both yourself and me into serious trouble?"

"No, no, don't take it—let me have it!" she pleaded.

"Oh, do, please. Oh, I want to kill them both. Don't stop me, please!"

"No, May, I tell you I won't have it!" he whispered. "Look here, give me the revolver. Don't be a fool! Seven years' imprisonment to brood over his punishment—kill him, and he suffers nothing. What is death, after all? No, let him live, and let him know how you have paid him out. I'll fix him up—I mean—we will fix him up between us. You understand? Now I won't take you to the place unless you promise—unless you swear to be guided by me!"

"Yes, you are right," returned May Leslie after a short

pause. "Yes, you are right. Death is nothing after all—just an easy way of going to sleep. No! let us get him seven years. Here, take the revolver."

Foxnisky took the pistol, and then told the driver to go on.

Within fifty yards of the house they stopped the cab and got down, and approached quietly. They went round to the back, where a light proceeding from a small window was discernible shining through a crimson blind with a reddish glare.

May Leslie held a handkerchief to her lip, still bleeding from the blow from Searight. She took up her position leaning against the window, the detective, by instinct, standing a little in the shade. She heard the voices of Searight and Violet within, speaking in under-tones. Violet was explaining how she had fooled her husband again, with a tale of Mrs. Johnston, who did not exist.

"Oh, how I detest that beast of a man!" she said.

Then Searight told of the row he had just escaped from; how his missus—he generally spoke of May Leslie by that name—who was awfully drunk, had been trying to tear and scratch him as usual. "I was trying to hold her arms in self-protection," he went on, "when Senior came up and hit me from behind, pretending that he thought I was striking the woman. You know, your husband always has had it in for me. You see, in the old times he was a cheeky youngster when we were at the front together, and I often had to snub him to keep him in his place. He has never forgiven me since. Well, look here, after he hit me, I was going for him, and what do you think the missus did? She suddenly hopped in and went for him properly, and commenced to pull his hair and scratch his face. 'Yes,' she said, 'you coward! to come and hit a man from behind like that!' Well, your husband, though he is a bully, can fight a bit, and so can I; and it would be a terrible struggle between us. Just as I was going to pull her off and have it out, I suddenly thought of you, and how you would be waiting for me; so I said quietly, 'Another time, Mr. Senior. I am sorry I cannot oblige you just now, but don't forget another time,' and then I walked down to the park to meet you, don't ye know."

It was curious, but in Violet's heart flashed a feeling of pride at the chivalry of her husband in taking the woman's

part. She could tell Searight was lying—she judged by the way she lied herself. A sudden feeling of repugnance came over her for this man, who had so falsely abused the husband who had always been so gentle, kind, loving, and forgiving. She was silent, and he, wondering at her sudden quietness, chaffed her, and asked what was the matter—was she afraid or what? He next began to kiss her, and the sound of each kiss was like a stab to May Leslie's heart, who, with head half turned, was straining to catch each rustle. But Foxnisky felt radiant; things could not have turned out better, he thought.

The wind had been blowing in strong gusts, and making strange noises amongst the huts and shanties around.

May Leslie had at first felt thankful to the elements for so harmonising with the tumult within her breast, but now the rain poured down in torrents, creating a deafening noise on the roofs of the adjacent buildings.

Foxnisky touched her arm, and whispered that she had better take shelter until the storm had passed, and pointed to a small house close by, with a verandah round it. May Leslie impatiently shook her head.

At length the squall passed and the rain ceased, and Violet and her lover issued from the house. They stood for a few moments together. Then, after a kiss, he hastily whispered, "Good-night. Pleasant dreams, sweetest love. To-morrow night at eight, remember;" and after nodding gaily, Violet sped on her way, Searight watching her till she was out of sight, before striding in another direction.

May Leslie's last words to the detective, when she bade him good-night, were, "Don't fear me—I won't spoil anything. I am an actress—you ought to know that. Oh, I'll love him! Oh, I'll be kind to him! He will never suspect I know anything." She laughed, and her laugh sounded strangely discordant.

This woman could hate as fiercely as she could love.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

At nine o'clock on the following morning Searight was having breakfast. May Leslie was still in bed.

"Charlie, dear!" she called out.

"Yes," he answered.

"Immediately you have finished your breakfast I want you to go for Dr. Crowlet. I feel quite ill this morning."

Searight got up, napkin in hand, and came into the bedroom, wiping his moustache.

"Why, what is the matter, old girl?" he asked.

"I feel so feverish, and I am so anxious. I hope I am not in for an attack of fever. It feels precious like it."

The man seated himself on the bed and tried to assume a sympathetic look. As usual after a quarrel in which he had been the aggressor, he was feeling a little afraid at his own violence, and anxious to be assured that the other was still as forgiving as ever. The swollen, cut mouth, too, had an ugly look this morning, and made him feel ashamed, as it bore evidence of his gross brutality.

"Poor old girl!" he said. "Yes, I shall go for Crowlet at once."

"Finish your breakfast first, dear. I say, Charlie, you will forgive me for being so unkind to you the other night and for throwing that plate at you? I love you so much, and I get so jealous of you, that it turns my brain."

Searight's spirits rose as he answered, "Yes, May; and I was beastly rough on you, too, last night. I am devilish sorry for it, don't ye know."

"All my fault," she replied. "But, Charlie, do let us try to get on better. I am a fool to be jealous. You would never be unfaithful to me, would you, after all the years I have stuck to you in spite of everything?"

"No, 'pon my honour, I would not! On my honour as a gentleman, I would not! But now I'll go for the doctor at once. I have had as much as I want to eat, anyhow," and he hurried off for Dr. Crowlet.

May Leslie was terribly anxious to be well this day.

Who would have thought that this woman, who this morning, as usual after being brutally assaulted by her lover, was so subdued and caressing, who spoke so humbly,

had a feverish longing to spring up and stab the man to the heart—to strangle him?

For her love, wondrous in its depth and constancy, had changed to fierce hatred. What a great share vanity has in that mysterious quality called love! One single act of unfaithfulness had been sufficient to do what years of cruelty, heartless selfishness, and basest ingratitude had failed to accomplish. Now her whole aim was to ruin him, and she found a fiendish pleasure in her treachery.

The hate that hissed and seethed within her inspired her to act her part with a coolness and judgment beyond belief. How she suffered in self-esteem, as through her brain passed the remembrance of the years in which she had been slaving, crawling, grovelling in the mire to gain this man's love! Love, indeed! The blinding scales had been torn from off her eyes. But her affection had done one great and lasting good: it had taught her that virtue is a sacred thing, not to be bartered for and knocked down to the highest bidder. She had passed through much sin and crime—incited by her passion, it is true; but through the fire of it her soul had become refined and purer. Never again, she well knew, could she lower herself to sell her caresses.

She shivered with a loathing at her past life.

Searight soon returned, accompanied by Crowlet.

"Oh, doctor," she began, "I hope you won't think me foolish, but I am in a dreadful state of anxiety about having fever," and then she described her symptoms.

Dr. Crowlet pronounced her ailment only a simple cold, with a little fever produced by it. She would probably be well in a day or two, if she were a little careful; and he wrote out the inevitable prescription.

"Oh, I am so glad! I am not nervous, doctor, but sometimes I have strange fancies. But, Dr. Crowlet——"

"Well?"

"I am so anxious to see what sort of form my luck is in. Do you fancy yourself this morning?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you feel strong, like throwing a few mains at hazards, you know?"

Laughing, Dr. Crowlet said, "Oh, I don't know, but I have no time—I have a lot of patients to visit."

"How much do I owe you for this visit?"

"Oh, say a guinea."

"Well, then, doctor, I'll go you double or quits. I'll take the box, and you can lay me a level shot about the six."

"Oh, all right, Mrs. Searight, just to please you. You know I must humour my patients."

"Charlie," said May Leslie, "fetch the box; in the top drawer, you know. Yes, that one, thanks. Now, what will we throw on? Oh, the counterpane. Here, doctor, you hold it here, and you, Charlie, here. Tighter—that's it." She sat up, put a shawl round her shoulders, and then rattled the box, while Searight and Dr. Crowlet held the counterpane for her to throw upon. She said, "First pop, doctor. Oh! I feel very fit. Here goes, a four and a deuce."

And sure enough when she lifted the box there was turned up a four and a two.

Searight laughed heartily, and said, "By gad! she named it, too! Did she not?"

The doctor laughed quietly, and said, "Yes, she just did. I must be going; but look here, I'll just lay you one more about the six, just once—what do you say?"

"Right you are," May Leslie replied; and she started off again. The doctor kept invoking the seven to turn up by constantly repeating, "A four trés. A four trés." And she answered by saying as she threw, "No, two trés, you mean. No, two trés, you mean."

After half a dozen throws a five and a one turned up, and May Leslie won again.

Searight laughed and said, "She may be in bad health, doctor, but she is in good luck."

The other shook his head portentously, and after a little pause said, "Come, just one more—what do you say? I'll go you double or quits, just once."

"Here, I'll tell you what I'll do," she replied: "I'll take a long shot about the little four. Fifteen to seven I'll take."

"Yes, all right," said the doctor; "only take dice this time."

May Leslie then put the three dice in the box, and after putting two fingers over the mouth of it allowed one to drop out. She then threw again. The doctor and

Searight, both ardent gamblers, eagerly watched the dice as they came out.

"Here, hold the thing tighter, you'll spoil my luck," said May Leslie to them, as in their excitement they were neglecting to keep the counterpane properly spread.

At last two twos came rolling out, and May clapped her hands and laughed as she said, "Oh, I am so glad my 'mozel' is in."

The doctor dropped the counterpane and said, "Damn!" and then hastened in a free and easy sort of way to apologise.

Searight shook his head and ejaculated, "By Jove!" admiringly.

Then Dr. Crowlet looked at his watch and murmured, "Have to be going! Look here," he went on, "does it not seem hard lines when I hurry up, don't finish my breakfast properly, come here to earn a sovereign, and lose—how much is it? One, two, fifteen, seventeen pounds, in five minutes?" Then he smiled, but a little ruefully; the others laughed.

"Here," he persisted, "double or quits for the last—£34 or nothing, and I'll take the box this time."

"Yes, very well," said May; and after handing him the box, she and Searight held the counterpane.

"What do you fancy for your main, doctor?" she asked.

"Oh, eight; the ten is my weakness, but I'll take the eight this time; level money, you know, double or quits."

The very first time he threw a seven, and the woman won again.

"Damn!" he exclaimed as he threw the box down, and then again asked pardon in the same free and easy way.

Searight and May Leslie laughed, and the former said, "Did you ever see such form? If she had only been playing with a good big crowd of punters!"

Dr. Crowlet had now arrived at that state when he would have played for his last penny, no matter if he knew that some of his patients were in risk of dying through his neglect. He begged of May Leslie to give him just one more show of getting his money back, but she would not.

"No," she said, "I do not want to play my luck out."

Then the doctor challenged his ex-collector, but Searight, mournfully shaking his head, said, "I have no pieces;" then, turning to May Leslie, "lend me a fiver, May, just to oblige the doctor."

"All right," she replied, "I shall stand good for a fiver; go ahead."

In a short time Dr. Crowlet won the five pounds, and May Leslie's eyes gleamed with delight, but she said in a soft tone of condolence, "Poor Charlie! your luck never seems to be in."

"Here, doctor, another fiver; the missus will stand good for me," said Searight.

"No, I won't, not now—no, doctor, you need not throw—no, I won't! I have my reasons."

The doctor begged, Searight entreated, but all in vain; then the latter, losing his temper, accused her of being mean and selfish, but he refrained from the usual foul language on account of Dr. Crowlet's presence.

May Leslie said nothing in reply to Searight's ill-natured remarks, but, turning to the doctor, asked him in a matter-of-fact way if he would be so good as to give her the twenty-nine pounds he owed her.

Grumbling and muttering, Dr. Crowlet, who was known amongst the gambling fraternity as a "bad parter," produced his cheque-book and gave her the cheque for the amount, for there was something about the expression of her face that prevented him from making any excuse at the moment; then picking up his hat and saying, very abruptly, "Good-bye," he left.

Searight immediately abused May Leslie for her stinginess with his customary freedom. She eyed him curiously. She could have tortured him, made him howl and shriek with pain. The power of her hate made her brain swim; she feared she was going to faint. With a superhuman effort she pulled herself together, and spoke, though her voice trembled—Searight thought it was through fear.

"Charlie, dearest, I am full of fancies to-day, darling. I am, as you know, very superstitious, and strangely enough my whims come off. I cannot even describe to you what the sensation was like, but I seemed to know that it would be a certainty that you would lose and the doctor win, so I decided not to give you any more to play with him. But, darling, I am going to be most generous

to-night. I am going to give you more than ever I did at one time before to play with. And it will have to last you a very long time, do you hear? A very long time, because I am getting poor, but I have a strange fancy that you are going to come out a big winner to-night, for I am going to give you good luck, the luck you deserve, my boy. Only you must do everything I tell you—you must not forget."

Searight actually felt ashamed, and muttered an apology; said something about "that beastly temper of mine."

"Yes, Charlie, dearest, both our tempers are bad, but I am going to be so good to you to-night that your temper is sure to improve—for a long time anyhow. Now, darling, go out and have a walk. I want to try and have a sleep, but mind you come home to dinner at half-past six. Do you hear?"

"All right, May, I'll be here. So-long. Have a good sleep."

"So-long, dearest."

And then he left.

He came home punctually to dinner and found May Leslie up and apparently quite well. He observed her closely, with surprise, for she was looking strangely beautiful. The swollen lip seemed completely cured, she had been bathing it the whole day long. She was attired in her richest and best-fitting black dress; her eyes were sparkling with a peculiar brightness. A flush lit up and shone through her transparent olive skin, and in her face there was an eager expression, irresistibly attractive. Searight could not take his gaze from her eyes.

On the table was a repast containing many of the little delicacies he specially liked, for he was a great epicure.

She made him take her place at the head of the table. She was anxious to give him her luck, she said, and he must do everything she asked him. Searight, like the majority of gamblers, was superstitious in all such details, and he was prepared to implicitly follow her instructions so as to get the luck she wished to confer upon him.

May Leslie did not eat, but she attended to Searight; she replenished his plate; she kept filling and refilling his glass with burgundy and champagne, a mixture to

which he was very partial. She chatted to him; she seemed charged that night with loveliness, wit, and clever repartee. She hovered round his chair, kissed him, rubbed her cheek against his, whispering loving words in his ear, like the soft purring of a cat. And Searight experienced a pleasing sense of the general fitness of things. It was simply delicious, this good food, good wine, and the pretty face smiling and cooing, only thinking of administering to his comfort and pleasure. "Ah, there is no doubt about it, if you want a woman to love you, never spoil her; in fact, do the other thing," he thought.

And May Leslie had all the glamour of the inspired actress upon her, who knows that she is holding a large audience spellbound, who feels she is at her best.

Then Searight's thoughts turned on Violet, whom he was to meet that night. "By Jove," he said to himself, "she is a 'nailer;' I am getting beastly fond of her, she has such fetching ways. But is not May looking splendid this evening! I feel quite gone on her, too. I never remember her looking so well, she is simply fascinating. I have a good mind not to go out to-night. Oh, but May is mine at any time; and then I am going to have a good gamble to-night. I wonder how much she is going to give me?"

At length he finished eating. May Leslie lit a cigar—how coquettishly she did it!—and handed it to him.

"Now, Charlie," she said, "I am going to give you the cheque, and you can go down to the 'Craven' and cash it. They always take my cheques; and I believe that they play the strongest game there of anywhere now, so they tell me."

"Yes, I believe they do."

"Well, come, it is time you were off; I'll go and get the precious slip."

She went into her room, and was away about three minutes. When she returned she said, "Now, stand up. You must do exactly as I tell you; do you hear?"

"Yes, all right, I'll pay strict attention."

"Now, here it is; look at the figures." She held a cheque half open to him, and Searight read the figures £250 *os.* 6*d.* "The odd sixpence is for luck," she added.

He was indeed surprised. Even in their palmiest days she had never given him a sum like that at one time,

By heavens! it was splendid! It took him so much by surprise that he stammered and stuttered when he tried to thank her.

"Now, Charlie," she interrupted him, "I want you to pay attention to me. There are five sovereigns [she placed five sovereigns in his hand], put them in the left pocket of your trousers. Now, you are to start playing with them, and I am going to put the cheque in one of your pockets, and you are on no account to touch it until you require it. If you do, your luck will go; now, I feel sure of it! I have a feeling that you won't even require it to-night, that the five sovereigns will be quite sufficient to do the trick. I am going to put it in one of your pockets, and I don't want you to know which. When you want it, it will be time enough to look for it. Stand up straight, sir, and hold your arms up."

Searight did as he was told, and May Leslie put her fingers in all his pockets, one after the other, so that he would not be able to tell into which one the cheque was put. Then she buttoned up his coat and said, "Now, Charlie, if you disobey me, you'll lose the lot, I'm convinced."

"Ah! no fear of that," said Searight, laughing.

"Now, tell me, do you really love me?"

"Yes."

"Will you always be true to me?"

"Yes, always."

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes, I swear it."

"Kiss me, then."

He took her in his arms and kissed her.

Oh! if he could only have seen that smile over his shoulder!

He sallied forth in the best of spirits and good-humour as he puffed away at his cigar.

When he got to the bottom of Lennox Street a Kaffir came out from behind an iron fence, close to the circus building, and handed him an envelope. Searight read:—

"MR. WRIGHT,

"Lennox Street.

"Please direct boy."

He threw the envelope down on the road and swore at

the boy, and then proceeded on his way, and soon reached the rendezvous, the top corner of the park close to the road.

Violet was there; she advanced to meet him. "Well, you are punctual to-night," she said, as she sidled up to him.

He put his arm around her, and was going to kiss her, when three men sprang out from the ditch close to the hedge, and closed round him and grabbed his arms. He recognised the voice of Foxnisky.

"All right, Mr. Searight, don't be alarmed—we are not going to commit a robbery. You have only to come with us and be searched."

"Here, take your damned hands off! What do you take me for? Here, I say, let go! I tell you you have made some mistake!" he haughtily exclaimed; and Violet felt ready to faint with fear.

"Oh, no, we have not!" answered Foxnisky; "you are in 'the trade,' we know. You remember that stone you sold Faganstine? That is some years ago. I bet you know more about the business now; you would not make that mistake now, eh? How about the Kaffir we saw with you just now?" And they dragged him away.

"You cursed fools!" Searight said, having no fear, only being much annoyed. "That Kaffir, if you want to know, only wished to be directed to some address that he had on the envelope. Come now, stop this rot! None of your jokes, Foxnisky. Don't you see there is a lady waiting for me?"

They never answered a word, but compelled him to go along.

"They have made some mistake. I'll be back in a few minutes. Wait for me!" he shouted back to Violet.

"You may have to wait a long time!" the detective also shouted back to her.

Then the shrill laugh of a woman broke upon the stillness of the night; it was a horrid, jarring, mocking laugh, that went straight to Searight's soul, making his cold flesh creep, his heart sink.

The moon, which had been hiding behind a big bank of cloud, now came out, and with a cold whiteness lighted up the darkness that had reigned before. Searight turned

and looked behind him with the strange awe of a child fearful of beholding a ghost. He saw a woman standing with Violet, and he recognised May Leslie.

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, as a sudden horrible suspicion flashed in his mind. He had to be held up by the detectives, his knees refused to support him, through the craven, ghastly fear that came over him.

The Detective Department offices were close by, and he was taken into a room there, and the searching commenced.

He felt choking from intense painful excitement as Foxnisky began to feel in his pockets. The latter quickly produced six differently-sized rough diamonds from three of the arrested man's pockets; and Searight felt a dizziness bewilder him; he almost believed himself asleep and dreaming, everything seemed so unreal. The detectives' voices sounded far away as they broke through the loud buzzing noise in his ears. He tried to speak, to declare his innocence, but he could not get his trembling lips to frame a sound.

Foxnisky drew forth a slip of paper from the inside coat-pocket.

"Oh!" he said, "what is this? Looks like a cheque;" and he read, "£250 os. 6d. Big amount, that," he went on; "but there is no signature to it. Hold on, though, here is some writing at the back;" and again he read aloud, "*Good-night; pleasant dreams, sweetest love! To-morrow night at eight, remember.*"

And then Searight, dazed though his brain was, understood all; and fainting away, fell prone to the ground.

And Foxnisky laughed.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHEN Violet, who had been completely taken by surprise by the scene enacted before her, heard the cruel, mocking laugh at her side, she turned with a start. She recognised May Leslie.

The latter never looked at her, but gazed after Searight as he was led away. Violet stared at her, fascinated by

the fiendish expression on her face. The desire to run away was strong, but she could not move a step.

May Leslie still kept her eyes on the party of four until they came to a road on the right, which they turned down; and then she said quietly, and in the same tone of voice in which Searight had uttered the words, "Good-night; pleasant dreams, sweetest love! To-morrow night at eight, remember."

And Violet also understood that this woman knew all.

Then May Leslie turned to her and said, "Come with me to my house. I want to speak to you."

"Oh, no!" pleaded Violet. "You will do something to me. I want to go home—I want to go home!"

May Leslie said, "Do you wish me to go to your house to-morrow morning, then, when your husband is at home, and say what I have got to say? Here, come with me at once!" Then, pulling out a revolver, she said, "Are you quite sure I won't shoot you?" and bringing her face close, glared into Violet's like a tigress.

The latter was about to scream, when May stopped her. "Just you dare say one word now! Come with me at once!"

Violet wistfully looked around, but there was not a soul in sight, so she obeyed, and walked by the other's side, staggering as she went, as if drunk, so overcome was she.

When they reached the house May opened the door and signed to Violet to go in first; then she entered, locked the door, and put the key in her pocket.

"Now take off your hat and cloak, and sit down and make yourself at home."

Violet, in terror, threw herself on the floor, put her hands together, and cried out, "Mercy! mercy! Mrs. Searight! Oh, please don't kill me!" Then she grabbed the hem of the other's dress and kissed it in her craven fear.

May Leslie looked down upon her and laughed, then she said, "Is that what they do in the best society, that you told us the other night you had always mixed in? Get up, you false, cowardly wretch! Get up!" and she spurned her with her foot.

Violet slowly rose, still keeping her hands together, and now began to wail and weep most bitterly.

"Stop crying! do you hear? Stop, or I'll——"

Violet tried to control the deep sobs, but it seemed as if they would choke her in the effort to do so.

May Leslie gloated over her like a cat playing with a mouse. She still kept the revolver in her hand. "Come," she said, "I want you to amuse me. Do you know"—she lowered her voice into a deep tragic tone—"that I feel half mad? You must humour my slightest whim, or any moment I might do something dreadful to you."

Violet, seeing the other's heightened colour, flashing eyes, and cruel look, believed that she was really locked in a room with a maniac, and it was only terrible dread that kept her from fainting.

"Come, now," said May, "I want you to amuse me. Come and sing to me. I hear you have a nice voice. Let us see—what shall it be? What is that song I heard you sing when I was passing your place one night? 'Love's Own Sweet Song' or 'Story,' or something like that. It goes," and she sang, "'Just a song at twilight, when the lights are low.' Now go on. Don't irritate me by keeping me waiting."

And Violet quickly began, "'Once in the dear dead days beyond re-re-ca-ll,'" and then she broke down, convulsed by a great sob. "Oh," she exclaimed, "I cannot se-se-sing it now."

Her hostess laughed loudly. She was quite intoxicated with all the excitement she had gone through since the previous evening; she was approaching a highly nervous, hysterical state, and all kinds of absurd ideas entered her brain, of ways in which to torture this faithless wife.

She made her dance while she played a merry gavotte, and she had to stop every now and then, she would get so convulsed with laughter at Violet kicking her legs about spasmodically, looking like a helpless idiot, with her face blanched with fear.

She made her go on all-fours, and imitate the mewing of a cat and the barking and yelping of a cur.

She even made her try to stand on her head, and Violet rolled over as she made the attempt, then cocked her head up quickly and looked so timidly and beseechingly at the other, so like some poor animal in a travelling show that expects the lash of the whip for having failed in a trick, that May Leslie shrieked again with laughter. The more ridiculous the feat requested, the more convinced

Violet grew that the other had taken leave of her senses. The whole thing appeared to her as a ghastly nightmare, and she was well-nigh crazy with terror.

Then May Leslie made her take a chair close beside her, and commanded her to confess the whole truth as to her criminal relations with Searight.

And Violet, not knowing how much the other knew, told every little thing she could remember, hiding nothing, still fearing for her life. In order to appease May Leslie she confessed that all she had said about her husband at Madame Brown's was false, that he had always been most kind, and that she had neglected him, her home, and her child. She gave an account of how she had entrapped him into marrying her, and she even tried to make herself out viler than she was, with the hope that such humbling, such a sacrificing of pride, would soften the other.

"Now I owe your husband a good turn," May Leslie said after she had concluded; "he took my part the other night against that brute who will now have to work on the breakwater at Cape Town for some years, thank God! Of course you know that the story he told you is false, about his holding my arms in self-defence, because I was drunk and trying to scratch his face, and your husband coming up from behind and striking him in a cowardly way. No; Senior is a good, honest, brave fellow, and I have a kindly feeling for him now that I am cured of my madness. It seems hard luck indeed that he should have married such a rotter as you. Thank heaven! I was not married to that hound. Now the best thing I can do is to help him to rid himself of you. I must go and tell him about the whole thing."

"Oh, no, please, Mrs. Searight!"

"Don't call me that name! Did I not tell you just now that I was not married to him?"

"Oh, then, please, Miss—Miss—don't tell him. It would break his heart, for he is so fond of me! Oh, please, don't! I will be good, really good, I swear it!" And she again clasped her hands as she was standing in front of May Leslie, who was sitting on the sofa.

"Here, let us toss for it for fun," said the latter, and she rose and fetched the dice-box from the bedroom.

"Here, you throw first," and she handed Violet the box. "Yankee Grab, three throws, and ones count seven."

"Go on," she said, seeing her hesitate; and with shaking hand Violet began to throw the dice.

May Leslie, with elbows on the table, leaned over and watched. The first time two fives and a four came out.

"Pick them all up," she said; "play the game."

The second throw a six, a five, and a three turned up.

"Leave the six," said May Leslie, and Violet picked up the other two dice and then threw a one and a six.

"Not bad," said the other, "nineteen; but I bet I beat it, for my mozel—that is my good luck, you know—is in." And then she began to throw. "Let me see, a seven and two sixes," she said, as she threw the dice out. "I tie already, you see. I'll pick up the two sixes."

The second time she threw a one and a two.

"A seven and a deuce," she said, "that is two of them, and one more throw—a five to tie, a six to beat."

Violet looked on with pale face and fear-stricken eyes as she waited with feverish impatience for the last throw.

May Leslie kept rattling the one die in the box for a long time, watching the expression on her face. At length she threw, but left the box bottom up, with the die underneath.

"Now," she said, "I wonder what it is?"

She folded her arms, leaned on the table, and looked at Violet, who put her hand out to lift the box, but very quickly drew back as May Leslie said "If you dare!"

At length she lifted the box and a six was up, and Violet sank down on a chair and commenced to sob afresh. "Oh, please don't tell him!" she cried; "he will kill me, I am sure of it. He will, oh, I know he will!"

"Here, now, listen," said May Leslie, "I'll give you a little bit of a show. You must write a confession of your guilt and give it to me. I won't promise anything. I'll use my own discretion, but one thing I will promise is this: that if ever I see or hear of your being at Madame Brown's or talking to any of her set; if I ever hear of your taking a drop of drink, of your neglecting your home, husband, or child in any way, then I'll show your own confession to your husband."

She brought pen, ink, and paper, and set them down before her.

"Now, take the pen and write as I tell you."

Violet picked up the pen and dipped it in the ink.

"Now," began May, "write—let me see now—don't write that, of course. Oh, yes! 'I, Violet Senior,'" but Violet could not write, her hand trembled so. May Leslie went and half filled a tumbler with brandy, diluted it with water, and gave it to her. "Here, drink this," she said; "it will steady your nerves, but, by heavens! it will have to be the last, or you know the consequences. Though, mind, I don't promise anything, always remember that. Now go on, try again:—

"I, Violet Senior, do hereby confess that I have been criminally intimate with Charles Searight. I confess that I have lied about my husband, told people that he swore at me, struck and generally ill-used me, when instead of this he has been most kind, loving, and true to me always. I have neglected my home, my husband, and my child. I have frequently got drunk at Madame Brown's dress-making establishment. In fact, altogether, I have been a bad wife, a cruel mother, and a worthless woman. May Leslie——"

"Who?" asked Violet.

"May Leslie," repeated the other; "that's my name."

"May Leslie has made no promise not to show this confession to my husband, and if she does at any time it will serve me rightly." Would you put 'right' or 'rightly' there?" May Leslie asked.

"Right, I think," said Violet, in a quavering voice.

"All right, put 'right,' then," the other went on. "Now read it over to me."

Violet read it over in tremulous tones.

"Not bad, is it?" May Leslie said, after the other had concluded. "Now sign it."

Violet signed the confession, and May attached her own signature as a witness.

"Oh, you won't show it to him if I am only good, will you?" said Violet piteously. "I will be really good, I promise you, I swear it!"

"Now I told you I'd promise nothing, so don't annoy me. You can go home now. Off you go, I am tired of you," and she opened the door.

Violet hastily put on her hat and cloak, and quickly took her departure. She gave a deep sigh of relief when she got outside. May Leslie stood on the stoep and watched

her go down the street. When she got about fifty yards away, she called out "Violet! Violet!" The other turned round and feebly replied, "Yes."

"Come back," said May Leslie.

Violet slowly retraced her steps, being greatly afraid that May Leslie was going to tantalise and torture her in some other form.

"Come on, be quick! Run, do you hear me? run!" cried out May Leslie, and Violet broke into a trot.

"That is it," said the other, "you must always do what I tell you at once. I shall call round and see you to-morrow morning. See you have the house nice and tidy, a clean suit on Harry, too. And never you go out unless I give you leave, do you hear?"

"Yes."

"And, look here, in future I shall call you 'Vile' for short, and you will call me 'Miss May.' Do you hear?"

"Yes, Miss May."

"That is right. Good-night, Vile."

"Good-night, Miss May." And Violet went home.

Then two men, respectably dressed, rose up out of the recess between the corrugated iron yard-fence and the end of the stoep.

"By Jove!" said one, "what a lark! but we were nearly nailed, weren't we?"

The other laughed, and as they walked down the street they chattered and sniggered as they commented on what they had heard and seen through the window, the blind not having been quite drawn down.

Kimberley was a gossiping, scandal-loving town; the tale of Mrs. Searight and Mrs. Senior would be known to everyone by the morrow, only if possible exaggerated in order to heighten its interest.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"GOOD-MORNING, Vile."

"Good-morning, Miss May."

"Well, I could not come to see you before this; I have been laid up with a bad cold since I saw you five nights ago. I hope you have borne in mind what I told you.

How is it, now, that you are in that dirty-looking old dressing-gown at this time in the morning? You don't look much like a lady now, with your hair, too, all over the shop. Go and get little Harry at once. Don't stop to tidy him. I want to see him just as he is."

Violet looked rather nervous, but went and called Harry, who was playing at the back. As he came through the kitchen, which led into the yard, she dipped a part of her dressing-gown into a pail of drinking water, and hurriedly wiped his face and hands, and then brought him to May Leslie, who looked at him for a few moments, and then, holding out her hand, said, "Come, sir! shake hands. How do you do?"

The little fellow took the proffered hand, and said frankly, for he was not a bit shy, "Quite well, thank 'oo. How do 'oo do?"

May Leslie laughed merrily as she said, "Oh, I am all right, thanks."

"What is 'oor name?" asked Harry as he looked up with his face shining with the hurried polishing his mother had given it.

"Ah, never mind that!" And then, addressing Violet, she went on: "He is like his father. I hope he takes after him in disposition too. Did your mother wash and dress you this morning? Come, now, tell me the truth; never mind looking at your mother."

Violet was doing her best to attract his attention, and making signs of "Yes" with her lips.

Harry replied, "I always tell the t'ooth. Father says it is only funky boys tell lies. I am not funky. I a plucky boy."

"Does not take after his mother, I can see," remarked May Leslie. "Well, tell me, Harry, did your mother wash and dress you this morning?"

"No. Sixpence d'ess me. Mother wash my hands and face just now with her d'ess, when she call me to come in."

May Leslie sat down, took Harry on her knees, turned down his collar, and altogether examined him closely.

"All right, Harry," she at length said, "go out and play now."

The boy jumped off her knee, held out his hand, wished her "Good-morning," and, after bowing most politely—

for his father took great pleasure in teaching his little son to be polite—quitted the room.

"Ah! he is a fine little chap," said May Leslie admiringly, and she thought how she would like to have a son just like him. How she would look after him! She would love him with all her heart. Then suddenly she said to Violet in angry tones, "Look you here! What the devil do you mean? Did I not tell you plainly the other night what I would do if you neglected your duty? Oh! I suppose you don't care a rap, eh? All right, I have this document all ready here;" and she pulled out of the breast of her dress the paper containing Violet's confession. She flourished it above her head, and exclaimed, "Yes, I suppose I'd better tell him at once and have done with it, and the sooner the better."

Violet looked at her entreatingly as the other went on speaking as she would to a naughty child deserving chastisement:

"Just look at yourself, you slovenly creature! You are a nice sight for a husband to see when he comes home to his breakfast. Why, you are enough to drive any man off his feed! And your little boy too, unwashed, with his clothes all dirty, holes in his stockings! Upon my word! a woman like you has no right to have such a fine child. It does not seem fair, when there are thousands of women who would give almost anything to get a boy like him. And just look at this room, too! It has not been touched with a broom or a duster yet; no, not for some days, you lazy wretch! You leave everything to a raw Kaffir, I suppose? Just look at this lamp;" and she drew the point of a gloved finger over the shade of a lamp on the table, leaving a clear trace of the finger behind. "Show me over the house at once; I must look into everything. Oh, you are a dirty Afrikander!"

Violet, in some trepidation, obeyed, frightened to exasperate the other by saying a word in self-defence.

May Leslie professed to be disgusted at the state of all she saw.

"Where is your husband?" she asked. "When will he be home? I must just tell him at once! I said I would, and I will."

Violet, with tears in her eyes, begged, entreated her not

to. "I have been so ill this morning, Mrs. Se—I mean Miss May, that is what had kept me back; and it is only ten o'clock! Please, Miss May, don't be so hard upon me; you will never see things again as they are this morning."

"None of your lies!" said the other. "I suppose, because I did not come to see you for so many days after the night I got you to play monkey, you thought I had forgotten you, eh? But don't you fear, I mean to keep my word. I shall give you the benefit of the doubt this morning, but remember I don't promise anything, excepting that, of course, if you don't carry out my instructions to the letter, I will at once tell your husband everything. What time is he generally from home?"

"Who? My husband? He is out of a situation just now, but he goes out after breakfast, and nearly always after dinner—that is, about eight o'clock."

"Very well, I shall look in frequently; and if you don't keep your house, yourself, child, and everything else, in apple-pie order—you know the consequences; but always remember, I don't promise anything. I am still debating in my mind whether I shall tell your husband or not and be done with it. It would be, I believe, the wisest course after all, and the fairest to him. However, I am not quite decided yet, but I am inclined to think I shall."

"Oh, no, please, Miss May," began Violet again piteously, when the other cried, "Dry up! I want to ask you something. Does your husband?—oh, of course he knows! Tell me, what does he think about that cur of a lover of yours being trapped?"

She sat down on an easy-chair, and folded her arms.

Violet, who remained standing, leaning her hands on the back of a chair, replied, "Oh, he says he is sorry, and that he cannot forget the days when they were comrades together at the front. He says he knows Searight is a blackguard, but that he means to render him all the assistance that lies in his power, just as a matter of pure sentiment. He intends trying to raise the money to engage counsel to defend him, for he does not think he has enough himself."

"There, now!" said May Leslie, "fancy a dirty, faithless drab like you having a man like that for a husband!"

Violet blushed scarlet with shame at being so despised, for she dearly loved to be well thought of, but she was also conscious of a feeling of pride at the other's good opinion of her husband, simply because he was *her* husband.

"Has Senior seen that beast Searight yet?"

"Yes."

"And what does he say for himself?"

"I don't like to tell you," whimpered Violet.

"You don't like!" exclaimed the other. "Come, now, tell me immediately. Never hesitate in doing what I ask you at once. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Miss May!"

"Well, go on, then; what did Searight say?"

"He told Mr. Senior that you put the diamonds in his pockets, because you and he had a row. He said that you and Foxnisky (who is in love with you, he says) got it up for him, arranged it between the two of you; that you and Foxnisky together had trapped others before. He said that you had got a young fellow, Morris, into your house once, and that you sold him a trap-diamond when Foxnisky was hiding in the next room; that you had put the detective there purposely; and that, when Foxnisky opened the door to arrest him, Morris, who had heart-disease, dropped down dead from the shock, and that you had told him—Searight, I mean—all about it, and that you had laughed, thinking it a good joke."

"Yes, go on; what more did he say? Tell me all."

"He says," went on Violet, "that Mosetenstine, whose house you were living in, came in just at the moment, and saw the whole thing without being seen himself, and that he is going to subpoena him as a witness for the defence."

"Yes, go on."

"That is all my husband told me."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, quite sure."

May Leslie was silent for a little time and looked grave. Then she spoke again:

"And what did your husband say? Did he believe all this?"

"No; he said he did not believe one word of it; he thought you were incapable of doing such a thing—I mean, putting the diamonds in Searight's pockets. And he told

me how, when Searight struck you with his fist, a fearful blow, and he, happening to come up at the moment, hit him for doing it, you became fearfully angry at him, and tried to get a hold of his hair and scratch his face. He said he thought Searight was a fearful cur, but that you were so madly in love with him that you would give your life for him if necessary."

Violet felt a relief in telling May Leslie all this; she had a vague idea that it would lessen the other's resentment towards her—to let her know how little her husband thought of Searight, and how evidently he held her in some esteem.

"And did he tell you what I told him about you, when I said he ought to look after his own wife and not interfere with other men's?"

"No," said Violet in a low tone; and her jaw dropped, her eyes opened, and an expression of alarm came into her face; she looked at the other questioningly.

"Oh! I told him all you said about his ill-using you, and how you had been deceived by him; how he had spent the £2,000 your father left you, and about the 'best society' you had mixed in before you married beneath you; all, in fact, you told us that night at Madame Brown's when I told you off for telling such fearful lies; the night, you remember, you came gassing about the dreadful state of alarm you were in over Harry, when all the time you did not care a hang as long as you could have a good drink of brandy and slander other women not nearly so bad as yourself. Have you seen any difference in him since that night?—last Sunday night, it was."

Violet's lips trembled as she replied, "Oh, why did you tell him? I had taken a little too much to drink. I did not know what I was saying. Oh, yes, he has frightened me so much, he has seemed so quiet and worried-looking."

"Oh, I suppose," May Leslie went on, "he is one of those Johnnies who think, because he is fond of his wife, that she is fond of him. I expect he thought that I was only lying in my anger, but, oh! I must tell him the whole truth."

"Oh, please, Miss May——"

"Shut up, you snivelling thing! And has he engaged counsel yet?"

"Yes. Mr. Nurish."

"What! you don't mean that? Why, he is the cleverest and most expensive advocate in the place. It will cost your husband a pretty penny. Oh! I must tell him everything; 'tis not fair that he should be put to such expense all on account of a man who seduced his wife. Ah! you and he are a pair of beauties."

"Oh, please——"

"Stop, now, don't irritate me. I am going. Here, have you been drinking since I told you not to? But what is the use of asking? You won't tell the truth; you simply can't, there is a twist in your brain." She rose to go. "You had better boss up. Remember that your husband is watching you; after what I told him about you, he'll think there must be something in it. But I had better tell him everything. Poor fellow! he must be suffering agonies—best to put him out of suspense."

"Oh——!" began Violet.

"Stop! Don't annoy me!" cried May Leslie.

"Well, good-bye, Vile."

"Good-bye, Miss May, but please you——"

But May Leslie was gone; she slammed the door heavily after her, leaving Violet in a torturing state of apprehension and suspense, a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over her head. She felt so terribly miserable that even thoughts of suicide entered her brain, though there was but little fear of that tragic ending to her existence; her great nervous terror of death would always prevent such an event, no matter what she did or how she suffered. Oh, how she wished she had remained faithful to her husband, or, at least, that her faithlessness had never been found out!

CHAPTER XL.

ADVOCATE NURISH was regarded as a "character" in Kimberley. He was a man of about two-and-thirty, rather short in stature and insignificant-looking. He had a mania for the society of actors and actresses, and acting had for him a positive infatuation, though he had not the slightest idea of the histrionic art. He shaved clean, grew

his hair long, and did his best to imitate the dress and general style of the professional actor, after the manner of the little boy who sticks his hat on one side and struts like the soldier, the hero of his childish fancy. But idiotic as this weakness may seem, he was the smartest advocate in Kimberley.

Senior managed to secure the services of the clever lawyer to defend his old comrade Searight, who had been committed for trial. The fact that the accused was the son of a bishop had not a little to do with Nurish's agreeing to accept £100, the whole of Senior's little nest-egg, being much below his regulation fee for defending an I.D.B. These astute criminals were frequently very wealthy, and money could always be collected from them for the defence of any poor unfortunate who had been trapped and who had not the wherewithal to pay for his defence—which one of them knew when such aid might not be welcome to himself? Lawyers recognised this fact and charged accordingly. But Searight's case was an isolated one. He was too proud to associate with I.D.B.s, although he had been living for several years upon the fruits of this crime. No help, therefore, could be expected from this quarter.

Advocate Nurish applied for an adjournment of Searight's trial, on the ground that the principal witness for the defence, Ikey Mosetenstine, was in Natal, and not expected back for two months. The application was granted.

Although she knew that all Kimberley was cognisant of it, May Leslie experienced a strange aversion to the prospect of her past life being dragged up in court. The remembrance of her shame was to her now always a bitter consciousness of guilt and dishonour. She could not bear the thought of having to admit in cross-examination that she had lived with Mosetenstine as his mistress; and she was peculiarly sensitive, too, to the rumour that had been spread that the death of Morris was caused through the shock he received when trapped by herself and Foxnisky. Besides, awkward questions might be asked of her; other people might be compromised. She feared, too, that jealousy, through her late lover's intimacy with Violet Senior, would be brought forward to substantiate Searight's accusation of her putting the diamonds in his

pockets. She was terribly anxious that the man should have no loophole for escape. It was well known that men before this had been trapped through information supplied by jealous lovers, some of whom had even assisted in the ensnaring. Searight, she knew, was such an arrant cur that in order to keep his liberty, much though he might fear the other's fury and revenge, he would not hesitate for a moment compromising the wife of the man who was now acting as his best friend. Nurish, too, would have no scruple in the matter, and of course his client would tell him everything. Independent of any notions of honour Searight might have, the advocate would only study himself, his own reputation, and the kudos he would gain in getting the prisoner off.

May Leslie, a practised schemer, soon decided on a plan of action. She called upon Nurish. The advocate received her in his private office with bland, welcoming smile, and begged her to say in what way he could serve her that day. But May Leslie seemed diffident, and evidently was shy of mentioning what she had come about. The advocate, though curious, decided that the other should take the initiative; he was certain that her visit had some reference to his client Searight. To put her at ease he began chatting about the "Diplomacy" Company that was still performing in Kimberley to full houses. By his acting at times in the smaller pieces, he helped in no little way to increase the profits of this company, for he was continually treating his friends to boxes and seats in the stalls, anxious that they might see his performances. He was a good man, too, in another direction for proprietors of theatrical companies to keep in with, for there was always a way of getting a little advance of ready cash from him when the treasury ran short.

May Leslie delighted the other by some quiet and not too effusive compliments on his acting, and mentioned some parts in which he had particularly excelled. Nurish was very susceptible to flattery on this point.

Suddenly, after a little pause, she exclaimed in some confusion, "Oh, Mr. Nurish, I have come to see you about Mr. Searight."

"Yes; well?"

"I believe he says I put the diamonds that were found

on him by the detective in his pocket;" and she was apparently overcome, and sobbed bitterly.

The advocate spoke kindly. If she had anything on her mind, he said, she had better confide in him as a friend, and he would advise her.

She wiped her eyes with her handkerchief, and then began to feel her way to attain what she desired. The end of the consultation was a mutual understanding satisfactory to both.

Nurish took her round to the attorney, Mr. Scott, with whom he always acted. As a guarantee of good faith, May Leslie, after repeating before the attorney what she had already told the advocate, agreed to give them an affidavit to the same effect.

"Do you think," Nurish asked her, "you could possibly manage to be subpoenaed by the Crown for the prosecution?"

"Oh, yes, I could easily arrange that through the detective to whom I gave the information."

"Well," said he, "then that is the best way by far; for, don't you see, if in cross-examination I can get you as one of the witnesses for the prosecution to give good evidence, it will be of the greatest possible value to the defence; it will have a much stronger effect than if you were actually subpoenaed for the defence. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," she replied, "and it is a capital idea of yours, too, Mr. Nurish; I never should have thought of it."

"No, I suppose you wouldn't!" he said sententiously.

After she had gone, Nurish and Scott talked the whole matter over.

"What a splendid dramatic effect it will have!" the former said. "Ah! that Searight is a worthless fellow anyhow. There is no accounting for women. She is madly infatuated with him. I believe that, if necessary, she would allow herself to be burned alive to get him off now. She must have been terribly jealous of him to have ever thought of such a thing."

Advocate Nurish again applied that Searight's case should come on at the first sitting of the Special Court, as his client, for whom bail could not be obtained, was not of the ordinary species of I.D.B. He was a man of breeding, who had been gently nurtured, upon whose

health the anxiety and the shame of his position would have a most prejudicial effect. He had been fortunate in obtaining sufficient evidence for the defence; he now had no need to wait for the arrival of Mosetenstine.

This application was granted, but the advocate was informed that it was hoped this was to be the last one bearing on the case in question.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was the day of Charles Searight's trial. The small court was thronged. Every case of illicit diamond-buying was attended by as many I.D.B.s as could with convenience be present; they took quite a personal interest in such matters. And as it was a son of a bishop who was to be tried, many people of the better classes were present.

The wooden bar that railed off the portion of the court provided for the public was bending with the pressure against it. The I.D.B.s were all in front, having been in patient waiting from the earliest opening of the court. They were easily distinguished. The majority of them were flashily dressed, and apparently fond of wearing the gems they trafficked in; their dissipated looks told of late nights, drinking, and gambling; and their nervous, furtive glances indicated a continual and wearing state of alertness. Altogether there was something about them so characteristic that a stranger, after some months' residence in Kimberley, would have had no difficulty in picking them out.

The Special Court—so called from being specially set apart for these trials—consisted of two magistrates and a judge, the last acting as president.

Searight's case was first on the list. He was marched in between two policemen, and took up his position in the prisoners' dock. Dressed neatly, he looked very handsome and gentlemanly.

The enforced abstinence from dissipation had improved him wonderfully. His face was clear and fresh, and his blue eyes sparkled with a healthy brightness. He seemed quite cool and confident—even too much so—as he stood

up and looked about him in a braggart sort of way, assuming a smile of easy indifference. Nurish had told him that his acquittal was a certainty.

Then the registrar read over the indictment: Illegal possession, contravening Act So-and-so, etc., etc.

The prisoner pleaded not guilty. The prosecutor briefly stated his case, and then, in turn, examined each of the three detectives—Foxnisky, Shadsnick, and Newman—who had found the diamonds on the prisoner.

Advocate Nurish cross-examined each of them, and elicited the rather important item that the Kaffir, whom they stated they saw approach Searight at the bottom of Lennox Street, near the circus, might, quite probably, have only been wanting to be directed somewhere, and that the white thing which looked like a small parcel might only have been the envelope of a letter handed to the prisoner to read the address. Being so close to the principal thoroughfare, too, it was admitted it was a most unusual place for a Kaffir to attempt to sell illicit "stones." There was the customary amount of bickering between the two legal gentlemen, each frequently objecting to the other's questions.

May Leslie was then called for the prosecution, and she stepped up into the witness-box. She looked very pale, and there was a pained, anxious look in her beautiful face that appealed to all in court. Her dark dress was simple and well-fitting. She wore black gloves and plain white collar and cuffs.

The Crown Prosecutor rested his hands on his hips, affected rather a mincing smile, and softened the tone of his voice as he addressed her.

One of the magistrates was Irish, and he gave vent to his admiration by saying quite audibly, "She is a foine gurl!"

There was a snigger at this from those who heard, causing those who did not to inquire anxiously "What is it?" And on all sides could be heard information being given to inquirers that old Paddy Murthshaw had said "She is a foine gurl!" till the loud order of "Silence in court!" put a stop to it.

The judge, a tall man with a long bushy beard, now re-adjusted his glasses and stared at the witness intently. Many were the whispered jests at this.

The examination continued, and the witness answered the questions put to her with low, hesitating, and tremulous voice. Her eyes were cast down.

Yes, her name was May Leslie. She was not married to the prisoner, though she had passed as his wife. She had lived with him for more than seven years. She reluctantly acknowledged, and only after a great deal of pressing, that he had never done any work during that time; but she hastened to add, as if anxious that no suspicion of dishonesty on account of his idleness should be created, that she had supported him and frequently supplied him with money. She gave many evasive answers when asked if the prisoner had not demanded money from her on the Sunday night. At length she owned that they had had a quarrel which had something to do with money-matters. She then voluntarily gave the information that the next day he had apologised, and that they had been the best of friends afterwards.

The prosecutor now sat down.

Searight tried hard to brazen it out when he saw scorn and disgust on the faces that frequently looked at him, when it was elicited that he had lived on May Leslie. Like every cur, he hated to be seen in his true colours. But one thing had given him great comfort in the course of the examination of the witness, and that was his discerning plainly that she had truly repented what she had done.

Advocate Nurish, however, was not so well pleased at the way the witness had given her evidence; for he considered she had done so in such a manner as to convey the impression that she was in strong sympathy with the prisoner, an impression which, though undoubtedly representing her real feelings, was the opposite of what was to be desired for the effective carrying out of the plan he and she had arranged. Rising to his feet, however, he looked around him with an affected air of conscious power. Oh, yes! he would show them what he could do with a witness. Then he gazed sternly at May Leslie for a few moments in silence; at length he began.

"You say you have lived with this man for several years?"

"Yes"—still in the same hesitating, trembling voice.

"In fact, you were very fond of him?"

"Oh, yes"—pathetically.

"Confound it! that is not the way, you fool!" he mentally ejaculated.

"You and he have often quarrelled?"

"Yes"—hesitatingly.

"Very often?"

"Yes"—she sighed deeply.

"Especially lately?"

"Yes, more often lately"—another sigh.

Nurish swore inwardly as he thought, "She ought to have only allowed that after much pressing."

"Have you ever ill-treated him, now? Have you ever thrown a plate at him, a lamp, or a knife? In fact, have you not thrown many things at him? Tell me, Miss Leslie, is it not true you have a terrible temper?"

May Leslie looked at the advocate as if puzzled to know what he was driving at.

Nurish repeated the question, thinking "That is better."

Suddenly an intelligent look came into her face; she said very abruptly, "Yes, I used to use him shamefully, I own it, and he was so good to me."

"Oh, the idiot!" the advocate muttered in his throat.

"Now on the Sunday night, the night before the arrest, you had a bitter quarrel with your lover?"

"Yes."

"A very bitter quarrel?"

"Yes"—undecidedly.

"Searight is a good-looking fellow?"

"Yes, I think so"—timidly.

"Now tell me, were you ever jealous of him?"

"Yes, often"—with an ingenuous air.

Nurish felt really angry; her jealousy she was to have been slow to acknowledge.

"Why were you so often jealous?"

"Because he often stayed away, and would not tell me where he had been." (Tittering in court.)

"Now, the Sunday night when you quarrelled, did you not provoke him to such an extent that he forgot himself so far as to use personal violence?"

May Leslie remained mute, and Nurish repeated the question, the witness still considering her reply. Then, as if to fish out from the advocate why he asked her, she continued to give evasive answers, but in such

a way that it appeared she was anxious to shield the prisoner from the deserved contumely his brutal conduct deserved. Advocate Nurish showed signs of losing his temper.

Suddenly she exclaimed, "Yes, he did strike me with his fist on the mouth, a terrible blow." (Loud hisses were heard, and "Silence in court!" was bawled.)

"The imbecile!" thought Nurish. "This after my so carefully explaining to her how to answer these questions! And I thought her so wonderfully intelligent. Well, serve her right if we lose the case."

Now he was about to ask her a question her manner in answering which was crucial; he even trembled in the excitement of the moment.

"Do you know anything of a cheque that was found on the prisoner after his arrest?"

"A cheque?" she repeated.

"Yes, a cheque. Come, now, answer at once," and the advocate leaned towards her and assumed a suspicious and highly important look, as if much depended on this piece of paper.

"Yes, I think I do," she at length responded, in a tone implying surprise at any allusion to so trifling a matter. Nurish stamped his foot with impatience—she should have looked greatly concerned, or at least confused.

"What do you know about it?"

May Leslie, still looking perplexed, replied:

"Why, I put it in his pocket myself."

The blood rushed to Nurish's face as he audibly swore.

"Yes, and why?" he asked, in angry, impatient voice.

"To play him a trick. He wanted money to gamble with, so I wrote out a cheque for £250 *os. 6d.*, but I didn't sign it. I put it in his pocket, and made him promise not to look at it until he had lost all the money he had in his pocket, which was about five sovereigns."

This was said with an air of openness, as if no reason for concealment had occurred to her.

Nurish seemed agitated. He stared at the witness; she had disappointed him terribly. Before the trial she had appeared fully alive to the fact that much depended on her cleverness in giving evidence. A frank confession, even though true in every detail, would probably fail in gaining the prisoner's acquittal, as there would be

a strong suspicion that it was only a ruse on the part of the woman to secure her lover's liberty. She had understood so well the necessity of affecting an anxiety during the cross-examination that no motive of revenge should be discovered for her deliberately putting the diamonds in Searight's pockets, and then arranging with the detectives for his arrest! But what had she done? The questions that should have caused hesitancy or evasion had been answered readily. She had appeared frank when she should have shown guilty confusion—a confusion that by previous arrangement was to culminate in a complete demoralisation, a breaking-down of the witness, who, after some hysterical weeping, was to give a full confession, apparently induced to this by an overpowering nervous dread. Through the inexplicably stupid manner in which she had given her evidence, and the embarrassment caused thereby to the advocate, his questions had seemed senseless and without point. Nurish felt that he was appearing to very poor advantage. He was afraid of asking the witness anything more; it would probably only make matters worse. He never suspected that she was playing him false, he merely thought she had lost her head.

He must now change his tactics. The one course left was to make a strong appeal to her to confess, and to make it in such a way that the Court would feel that it was entirely due to his pathetic eloquence that she had been moved to repent her sin, and atone by full acknowledgment.

"Now, Miss Leslie," he began in an impressive voice, "I am going to ask you a solemn question. You have, in spite of the violent temper you own to possessing, something of a woman's loving heart, or your looks strangely belie you. You must pause and consider well before you give me your answer." Then the advocate proceeded in a very deliberate and solemn manner to address the witness, his voice at one time tremulous with pathos, at another sternly reproving. He alluded to the many convicted cases of I.D.B. in which women, from hasty passion, had informed against their lovers—even assisting to trap them. Doubtless the men so caught and convicted were deserving of the punishment awarded. "But supposing," he went on, "a woman in the madness of

jealousy and rage went even further—I can fully as well understand that one course would be quite as probable as the other—and, carried away by the heat of her rage, actually tried, by foul means, to have an innocent man convicted?" Then he pointed out the terrible iniquity of such a crime, and the inevitable remorse that must follow it. He spoke feelingly of the grievous shock the conviction of the prisoner would be to his father, "a minister of God, a man who took his position with the highest in the land." And the mother, too—how touchingly he alluded to the grey hairs that would go down "in sorrow to the grave"!

The Crown Prosecutor had shown signs several times of rising, but on each occasion Foxnisky had whispered something to him, evidently persuading him to keep his seat.

Nurish, after pausing for a few moments, again proceeded, but with lowered voice. "May Leslie," he said gravely, "the prisoner solemnly affirms that he never bought these diamonds that were found upon him; that he had no cognisance of them whatever until he saw them in the detective's hands; that he strongly suspects"—here he paused, then pointing with his finger to the witness, who had a look of surprise on her face, he raised his voice high as he brought the word out with stirring emphasis—"you! Yes, that You, in a moment of rage and passion, after the last quarrel, to revenge the blow he struck you, put these diamonds in his pockets, and afterwards conveyed——"

Here the Crown Prosecutor jumped up, vehemently protesting that his learned friend was pursuing an altogether unheard-of course. It was as if words were being thrust into the witness's mouth. It had been apparent to everyone that the witness had done her best, when giving her evidence, to shield the prisoner. It certainly looked—though it might not be the case—as if advantage were being taken of Miss Leslie's wonderful affection for the man who had mercilessly struck and abused her from time to time.

Advocate Nurish was most indignant, maintaining that he was at perfect liberty to lead up to any questions in cross-examination. Angry words now ensued; but the Court, on being appealed to, held that, though the counsel

was adopting rather an unusual course, he was within his rights.

In spite of this decision, however, Advocate Nurish was much annoyed. The Crown Prosecutor had thrown a sinister light on his eloquent and touching appeal. He had been compelled to make it by the witness's unaccountable stupidity. How much better, had he been able to force this witness for the prosecution to give the valuable evidence for the defence he had anticipated in simple effective cross-examination as pre-arranged!

After several throaty coughs, to gain time to collect himself, he at length continued—but much of the hitherto dramatic tone had vanished. "May Leslie, I abjure you only to speak the truth, and nothing but the truth! Did you, or did you not, put the diamonds found upon the prisoner into his pockets yourself, and then secretly convey to the Detective Department, by some means, information that Charles Searight intended buying illicit diamonds on the night on which he was arrested?"

Every face was turned towards the witness with anxious expectancy. Not a sound could be heard, not even the drawing of a breath. May Leslie was visibly moved. She bit the tips of her gloved fingers nervously and looked around at the faces gazing at her. Her lips parted; heads were strained forward to catch every syllable; but, though she seemed anxious to speak, not a word came forth. Searight stared at her—the smile of easy indifference had left his face. It wore an anxious look that bespoke the dreadful suspense he was enduring.

She suddenly looked straight at him, and with a yearning gaze of ineffable love. Impulsively she clasped her hands, leaning towards him as if she longed to take him to her arms, and then she spoke. Although the words came in a whisper they were heard distinctly all over the silent court.

"Yes, I did put the diamonds in his pocket."

A deep sigh came from the crowd, suggestive of the pent-up excitement at length liberated. But many of the faces looked disappointed, for there was no sympathy with the prisoner, who had lived on the woman for years and habitually ill-used her. Nearly everyone felt that, through her great love, May Leslie had lied to set him free.

The advocate looked around, but still far from happy. He then examined her at length, and she fully admitted everything.

In the heat of passionate anger, after the quarrel on the Sunday night, she had suddenly determined and devised what she had done as a terrible revenge. She had communicated to Newman and Foxnisky, the detectives, that her lover was going to buy some diamonds that night. No, she knew nothing about the Kafir who had been seen talking with the prisoner near the circus.

Searight's face looked quite pleasant now; every word she spoke was true, no doubt. Ah! yes, she had forgiven him, as he thought she would. She could not help herself, her love was so strong!

"Yes," she said in answer to Advocate Nurish, "she had put the cheque that had no signature in his pocket that night."

"And what was the real motive of your doing so?"

She hesitated before answering, and Nurish felt much annoyed.

"Surely," he said, with a shade of anger in his voice, "surely you have no reason to hesitate?"

Then quickly, as if an idea had struck her, she said, "Oh, yes; I was thinking of something else. I put it in one of his pockets and told him he was not to look at it until he had lost all his ready money. I did this because then he would not find the diamonds that I put in his pockets until the detectives had time to arrest him."

"And why had she not signed it?"

After a little hesitation again, she said, speaking rapidly, as if anxious to give the impression that she was quick in answering, "Oh, because then there would be no chance of its being used."

"And the meaning of the words on the back of the cheque?"

"I wrote that on the back of it because—eh?"—the damned fool! the advocate mentally ejaculated—"you see I—that is—I wanted to hurt his feelings, and when he read the words on the back of the cheque after the diamonds were found on him he would know that I had made a fool of him, though he could not prove anything."

Searight felt thankful that she had offered no further explanation, for terrifying thoughts of Senior had entered

his mind when the question was asked. Of course, now that May Leslie had confessed everything, there was no necessity for any revelation of his intimacy with Violet Senior.

The I.D.B.s whispered amongst each other. For their own sakes they would like it to be proved that May Leslie's confession was true, for it would then show a very weak point in the new Act regarding illegal possession; but they all suspected the witness of perjury.

"Silence in court," was cried.

The Crown Prosecutor then re-examined her, and, though she got on fairly well at first, he soon managed to make her contradict herself repeatedly. Nurish looked dumfounded, and Searight's face began to lose some of its pleased hopefulness.

She reluctantly confessed that Searight had often ill-used her—and a great deal worse than on that Sunday night—though she had always forgiven him. She admitted that when Mr. Senior interfered and struck the prisoner after he had assaulted her, she immediately took her lover's part and attacked the other. She was very confused when asked how she came by the diamonds she put in the prisoner's pockets. She made two different statements, and then stuck to the one that she had received the diamonds, before the new Act came out, from a gentleman who had since left the country. She did not know why she had not obtained a permit for them. She had never thought of it. She was not quite sure of the weight of the diamonds. Yes, she knew a diamond when she saw one (here many of the I.D.B.s laughed and looked at one another). She thought she would be able to tell the weight of the "stones" within twenty carats. She put the weight of the six diamonds down at about eighty carats. They were all (here she was somewhat confused) off-coloured. Some of them more so than others. She saw Newman on the morning of the day that the prisoner was arrested, and she then gave him the information. She made a mistake when she said she told Foxnisky as well. It must have been a slip of the tongue.

When the re-examination of May Leslie was finished, Searight's face had grown serious. He was still hopeful, and could not realise that there was any chance of his being convicted, for was he not innocent? But he was

surprised at her—such a clever woman, too!—giving her evidence in that stupid clumsy way. A doubt of her good faith never crossed his mind. Could she have been drinking? he wondered. Advocate Nurish looked positively fierce, with his head resting on his hand, as he turned over and over again the leaves of his brief. The Crown Prosecutor wore a self-satisfied and rather ironical smile.

Newman, the detective, was again called for the Crown, and denied having seen May Leslie the whole of the day. Why, he was out on duty on the boundary of the Free State from six in the morning till four in the afternoon. He received orders from his chief to accompany the other officers. This was the first he heard of the intended arrest and searching. The other detectives corroborated him. Foxnisky asserted that the weight of the diamonds was 312 carats, and that they were pure white, every one of them. The stones were produced and handed to the Court. All the detectives agreed that the prisoner was well known to be in "the trade." Foxnisky, in cross-examination, said he had often tried to trap the prisoner, but that the latter was too smart for him. He used to buy from his own particular "boys," and through a tout. Nurish here, in a severe manner, told the witness to be good enough to simply answer the questions asked, and not make statements he could not substantiate.

No; he, Foxnisky, could swear that he had received no intimation, either directly or indirectly, from May Leslie as to the prisoner's intention either to buy or sell diamonds. The information he got on the matter was from an entirely different source. He was not at liberty to say which. It was strictly against the rules of the Detective Department ever to divulge an informer's name.

Senior was called by the prosecution to give evidence as to the quarrel between the prisoner and May Leslie, and as to the latter taking her lover's part when the witness interfered, and how she attacked him.

Cross-examined by Nurish, he bore testimony to his comrade's gallantry and good conduct during the Basuto War, having, however, to stretch his conscience a little in doing so.

The Crown Prosecutor now kept his seat, he was perfectly satisfied.

Advocate Nurish lost both head and temper. In a blustering way he asked, nay, demanded an adjournment. There had just come to his notice, he said, at the last hour, certain circumstances, and he could now obtain most valuable evidence for the defence. He could show that May Leslie had acted in conjunction with the detective, Foxnisky, before; that the latter, it was well known, was deeply in love with her; that he could distinctly prove that jealousy, on account of May Leslie's discovering her lover's guilty intimacy with a married woman in Kimberley, was the motive for her crime. The confession was true and genuine, but the witness had soon afterwards repented of it, and had purposely contradicted herself in order to have the prisoner convicted.

The Crown Prosecutor here objected, and the advocate, now quite out of temper, got abusive, and was called to order by the Court. This he resented, and then apologised for doing so.

An adjournment was altogether refused.

Nurish, in a speech of an hour's duration, defended the prisoner. Never had he appeared to such disadvantage before.

The Crown Prosecutor spoke very briefly, but to the point.

Everybody except Searight knew his case was lost. The Court conferred together; people began to talk. The I.D.B.s whispered amongst themselves. "Oh, it was no go," they reckoned; "they could see through a stone wall as well as most people. Good of the woman, and clever too, but no go."

The expression on May Leslie's face was that of one suffering from terrible suspense.

The judge opened with a few remarks relating to his surprise and disgust at a man of the prisoner's general worldly advantages having been guilty of such a crime, and becoming so demoralised as to live upon a poor woman and then ill-treat her like a brute. There was no doubt about her fidelity and love for him. He was quite convinced the woman had perjured herself—made herself out a wicked, revengeful wretch—in order to shield him. Then, after expressing sorrow and sympathy for his relations, he sentenced Searight to seven years' imprisonment with hard labour.

Searight seemed stunned.

Just as he was being led away by two policemen, the hysterical cry of a woman was heard. He looked round and saw May Leslie struggling to come towards him, but held back by three policemen.

All eyes were upon her. It was a most pathetic scene.

"Oh, let me go to him!" she cried, "let me go! Charlie, Charlie dearest! I did my best—my very best!"

Then she seemed to lose her senses, for she laughed—and it was the same horrid laugh that had curdled his blood on the night of his arrest.

The whole court was affected. Not a few were seen wiping their eyes. It was evident to all how much this poor, beautiful young woman had loved the selfish brute—how earnestly she had tried for his liberty at the expense of her own good name.

And Searight again understood all; and the fierce power of her hate seemed to crush him, to freeze the marrow in his bones. It terrified him as a hideous haunting spirit would; not a thought passed through his dazed brain about the degradation—the sweet years of liberty that were to be now lost to him. No, his mind was filled with the awful reality of this woman's overwhelming hatred as they marched him back to his cell.

CHAPTER XLII.

SENIOR, to tell the truth, was not very sorry when sentence was passed on Searight, for he felt convinced his old comrade was guilty, and that May Leslie had given false evidence, caring nothing in her mad love for her own repute. Searight was in every way a mean, unscrupulous scoundrel. But for the sake of old comradeship Senior was satisfied—even proud of the action he had taken.

In the evening he had told his wife about the trial. All that day she had waited, dreading the disclosure of her guilt. Her name had escaped; but when Senior described how May Leslie had called out to Searight, and struggled towards him, laughing in the madness of her grief, Violet turned so pale that her husband was suddenly alarmed.

"What is it? what is it?" he asked.

"Nothing," she stammered, "only a horrid faint feeling come over me."

And she, like Searight, understood this woman's devouring malignity. Her heart shrank within her, for this hatred must also extend to herself. What terrible revenge might not May Leslie be scheming, to which the mere telling her husband that she had betrayed his honour would be as nothing! This state of dire suspense thoroughly unnerved her—kept her from sleep night after night. She grew pallid, thin, and worn.

But a new and intense happiness had come to Senior. To him an unaccountable change had come over his wife for the better. The house had become a picture of cleanliness; Violet was always home now, seemed eagerly anxious for his society, and not to like his leaving her for a moment. She cooked his meals, taking the greatest pains to please his palate, yet observing strict economy in her management. Her love for him had triumphed at last, as he knew it would!

But, irrespective of her fear of May Leslie, Violet was afraid to go out, for she had seen herself pointed at—had overheard remarks which showed her intimacy with Searight was common talk. One day, passing a group of men standing by the entrance of the Central Hotel, she heard an allusion to the horrible performances she had been compelled to go through by May Leslie on the night of Searight's arrest. Her face glowed with shame. Soon Jack would hear of everything.

In her enforced seclusion, for want of a better companion, she made much of her little son, craving for a sympathy in her trouble she knew she could not get. She kissed and hugged the boy with a frantic nervous rapture, but all from pity for herself. Oh! if he were only a man, she would be tempted to tell him all, and throw herself on his protection.

Through the care that was now taken of him, Harry got quite well. He was kept smart and clean. And the little boy, with his big affectionate heart, grew very fond indeed of his mother. His father, seeing all this, became still happier.

But another fear began to trouble Violet—a fear of herself, that she would, even against her will, confess every-

thing. It was like the terror that sometimes comes to people when looking down from some great height—that, in spite of realising the horrible consequences, they will cast themselves headlong and be dashed to atoms. When with her husband her lips were always forming the first words of the dreaded avowal: "Jack, I have been unfaithful to you." When not with him she was haunted by the thought that he would discover the worst.

She looked upon Leonard, who frequently came to the house now, with a cringing awe, for she read in his looks, his cold politeness, his knowledge and condemnation of her guilt. How exaggerated was her cordiality to the clerk, born of a craven wish to gain his silence! She even, when they were alone, tried to inveigle him with her fascinations, attempting to make her husband's friend false to protect herself.

But mixed with Senior's fresh happiness was a subtle tinge of doubt; for in his wife's reformation, the abject submission, the eager, servile desire to anticipate his least wish, was much that suggested fear—of him who had never given cause for anything but trusting affection. Sometimes, with cruel force, May Leslie's denunciation would come back to his mind again, producing heart-stabbing and irritating thoughts. But in the end his belief in her love would dispel disquietude. Violet, too, began suddenly to get very jealous. Thoroughly selfish, in spite of her own sin, that made her inclined to doubt and judge others by herself, she was fearful of anyone else sharing this man's love. She was continually harping at his old regard for Cheeky. She accounted for her fits of weeping and depression as being caused by her doubts of his fidelity. "Was he sure he never wrote to her?" "Did he know that she had lately arrived in Kimberley and was nursing in the hospital?" "Then did he never see her?" "Had he really learnt to love her better than the ex-barmaid?" But to Senior this jealousy was increasing proof of her affection.

One day, looking for some keys he had mislaid, he mechanically put his hand in the pocket of Violet's ulster, that was hanging in the bedroom. He drew forth a handkerchief: a strange name in the corner of it caught his eye. Looking more closely, he deciphered—"C. Searight."

He brought it to Violet, who was in the sitting-room, trying to read a novel. "Just look at that handkerchief," he said, throwing it in her lap. "Fancy, I found it in your ulster pocket! Look at the name on it—of all persons in the world! How on earth did it come there?"

Violet's face grew scarlet, then colourless, as she stammered, tremulous with fear, "Oh, I don't know! I am sure I don't know! On my word of honour, I don't know!"

Senior stared at her, and she, mistaking his surprise for suspicion, burst into tears, exclaiming again, "Oh, I don't know! Oh, I don't know! I swear I don't know!"

The husband, who had with grave anxiety noticed of late his wife's nervousness and depression, was now only troubled by disquieting thoughts as to her health. Putting his arm round her, he kissed her lovingly, and spoke gentle words of sympathy. Then, seeing that her fears were unfounded, she happily thought how to account for this strange handkerchief. She dried her tears, said she was feeling dreadfully nervous and melancholy, and she explained that as Mrs. Searight or May Leslie—whatever she was called—had the same laundress as she, probably the handkerchief had been accidentally changed in the washing.

"Oh, bother the handkerchief!" said he; "I hope you are not in for an attack of that beastly nervous exhaustion. You are getting the same symptoms as——" Then he stopped short.

But that night, some time after they had both gone to rest, he was awakened by his wife crying out, "Jack! don't kill me, please! Oh! don't kill me! I was mad, I was drunk, I swear I did not know what I was doing!"

He woke her up, and when she opened her eyes a genuine look of terror came into her face as she saw him bending over her.

"What is the matter, darling?" he said softly. "Nasty nightmares, eh?"

Thankful it was only a dream, she clasped him round the neck, sobbing hysterically, bitterly conscious of another fear—that she would confess in her sleep. What a hell this poor wretched woman suffered!

A few nights later, tossing, wakeful, she heard a noise outside. It frightened her, and she hastily shook Senior.

He sat up in bed drowsily.

"What's the matter?" he asked, with a yawn.

"There is someone—can't you hear for yourself?—at the back door," she replied.

He heard a timid knocking at the kitchen door which led into the back yard. He jumped out of bed, wondering who it could be at such a time. He passed through the kitchen. Sixpence, the Kaffir boy, was lying there full stretch on the floor, enveloped in a blanket, not even his head in sight, snoring away in spite of the knocking close to him.

Senior opened the door. The moon was shining with a full, pure, soft light, flooding the iron houses and buildings around with a snowlike whiteness. Everything looked weird and ghostly; even the stunted gum-trees in the neighbouring gardens had a spectral appearance as they moaned and sighed in the slight breeze that stirred them, causing their top branches to wave like the plumes of a gigantic hearse.

He again rubbed his eyes, for before him was a man in a crouching attitude, looking like a tramp as he glanced furtively about.

Senior eyed him with suspicion, keeping his right hand firmly closed in readiness for sudden attack.

"What do you want?" he asked sharply.

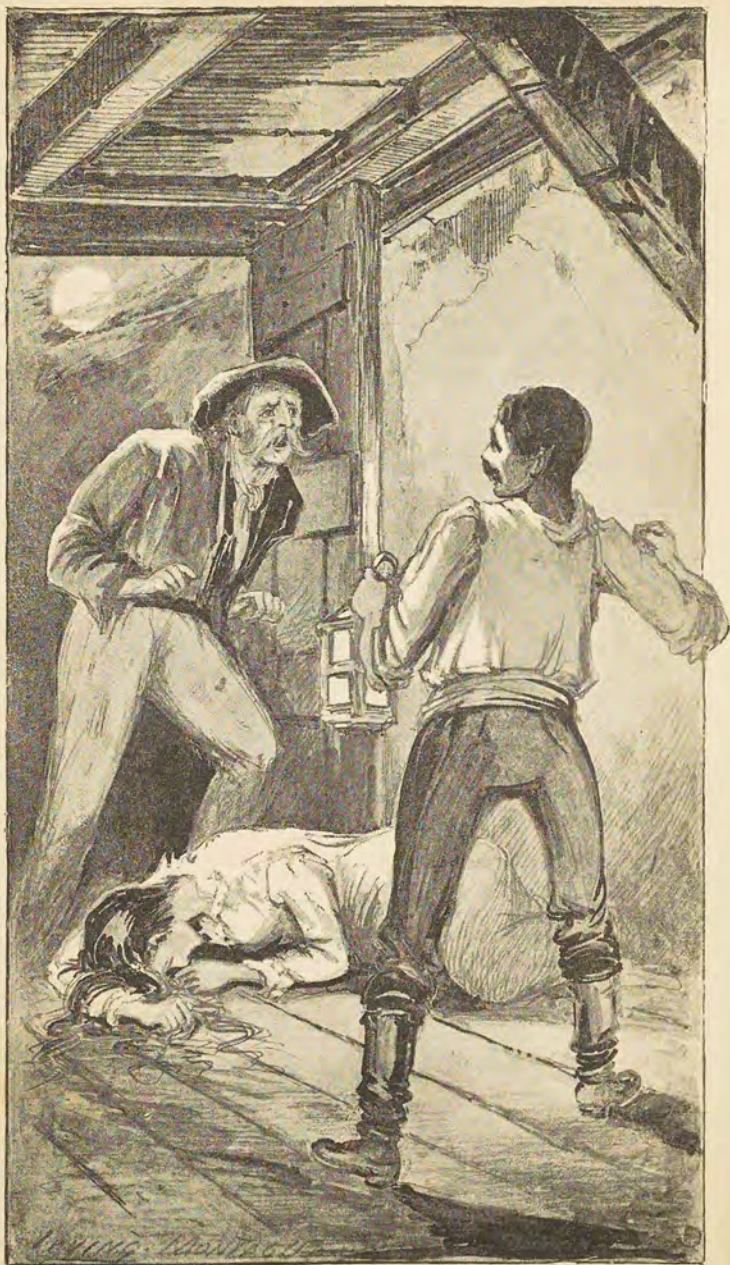
The man came closer, and then in a voice hoarse, as his teeth chattered, said, "Let me in! For God's sake let me in, quick, before anyone sees me! Oh, what a terrible time I have had of it. Oh, Jack! you won't split on me, I know! Give me some brandy, Jack, I am dying of cold."

Senior's eyes opened wide with amazement, so surprised was he that he could say nothing, as he led the other into the room.

Violet, in her chronic state of alarm, hearing a voice that she did not know calling her husband "Jack" so familiarly, got out of bed, and with mingled fear and curiosity opened her door a little and looked out.

The pale moonlight streamed in through the windows, falling on the stranger standing with shoulders bent, shaking as if in a fit of ague.





She looked like an angel fallen from heaven as she lay there between Senior and Searight.—Page 365.

Her heart beat rapidly. Wild supernatural fancies filled her disordered brain. She opened the door a little wider.

"Brandy! for God's sake, brandy, Jack!" said the man entreatingly.

Her eyes became fixed, her pale face drawn and rigid; the room seemed to wave up and down, the man was floating in mid-air. Ah, Fate was too strong in every direction; he had come back to tell her husband everything. She clasped her hands together as if in passionate appeal; made an effort to come towards him; shrieked out, "Don't! oh, don't! have mercy!" and then she fell in a faint between her husband and the other, with her arms out before her, her hands still clasped. Her long, dark, luxuriant hair fell over her arms and shoulders in disorder, the white nightdress appeared like a garment of silver in the soft rays of the moon. She looked like an angel fallen from heaven as she lay there between Senior and Searight.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"WELL, Jack my lad, how are you? But man, you are early this morning. Where have you been all this long time?" said Mr. Stewart, fresh from his bath, and towel in hand. He stared at Senior wonderingly, for it was but six a.m., and he noticed his young friend had a grave look.

"Mr. Stewart, I have come to ask you a favour."

"Well, that is all right, as long as it won't cost me anything. Anything I can do for you I will. Oh, yes, I will, if there is no siller required, do you see?"

"But that is just it," the other replied. "It is money I want."

"Eh, why? what is the matter now? Surely you have not been getting into debt, with your nice little income coming in too?"

"No, I have not."

"Well, tell me what you want the money for? But here, come into the bedroom, I can listen to you while I am dressing."

After they had got into the room, Senior, sitting down close to the bed, said, "I really cannot tell you why I want the money, Mr. Stewart; but if you could lend me, say £250, I should be awfully obliged, and I would pay you off monthly."

"But surely you can tell me what you want it for?" said Mr. Stewart, as he drew his shirt over his head. He began to feel curious about the object of the requested loan.

"I am sorry to say," said Senior, "I am really not at liberty to tell you."

"Well, no," replied the Scotchman, as he shook his head thoughtfully, "I don't think I can—in fact, I am pretty well sure of it. My money is all tied up. Ay! I am, don't ye understond, hard up the now for ready cash. I am even overdrawn at the bank."

"Could you give me any idea how I could raise the money, then? I could not give any proper security, that is the worst of it, and I would not want to pay through the nose for the loan, either."

"No, I could not," said the other rather sharply, for he felt annoyed that Senior did not take him into his confidence, and he was all the more anxious to know, owing to the other's reticence. "Who would lend you money without good security? I'd like to know," he said.

A pause ensued.

"Mr. Stewart," Senior said presently, "you once promised to give me £500 if I would consent to a certain thing. Do you remember that?"

Mr. Stewart, who was standing before the looking-glass adjusting his necktie, suddenly turned round. "Eh! what is that?"

Senior repeated his remark.

"No"—Mr. Stewart gave a short laugh—"I can't say I do remember. What was it?"

"You said once, if I agreed to fight that fellow Donnell who defeated Joe the Brum, you would make me a present of £500."

"Yes! Well?"

"Are you still on?"

"Ah, that was a long time ago, my lad, over four years isn't it?" Mr. Stewart sat down on a chair close to Senior, and leaning his elbows on his knees, looked intently at him. "Ay, my boy," he went on, "mind ye that was a

long time ago; but you don't mean to tell me that you would fight this fellow if I lent—if I managed to get ye the loan of the pieces somewhere? Of course, I don't say I can, but would ye?"

Senior did not reply; he looked down at his legs as he stretched them out. Mr. Stewart impatiently said, "Come, now, never mind admiring your legs; they are very pretty, no doubt. Tell me, would ye?"

"You said"—and Senior laughed a little—"that you would make me a present of double that amount; but, joking apart, if you lend me, say £300, get up my stakes, and manage everything, I'll challenge Donnell—there, now!"

Mr. Stewart jumped up and extended his hand. "Shake hands, my lad!" exclaimed he eagerly; "it's a bargain."

"I'll tell you now——" Here a knock came to the door. Mr. Stewart impatiently opened it. "Oh, it's only the boy with the coffee. Have a cup? No? All right, Gladstone," addressing the Kaffir boy, "you can go the now."

The Scotchman went into the next room, and almost immediately reappeared and handed Senior a cheque for £300.

"There, my lad, and I want no security, your honest face is quite enough for my money. I know I can take you at your word—that you'll no go back."

Senior, thanking him, folded the cheque and put it in his waistcoat pocket.

But Mr. Stewart's curiosity had grown feverish. It must surely be something very extraordinary that could make the other consent to engage in a prize-fight. He decided to do his best to solve this mystery.

"Now, I am going to tell you something," he began. "If you are in any trouble, you can't do better than tell me. I may be getting a bit auld and silly, but there is a wee bit left here yet"—he touched his forehead with his finger. "I don't want to know, do ye see, out of idle inquisitiveness, but just to help ye if I can. Oh, yes, that's all."

Senior did not reply. The Scotchman went on:

"And you can just trust me, what a wonder! And I'm telling ye, I don't care if it's even forgery, that you or any

pal of yours might have committed, it would be all the same ; when I am a friend to a man, I am a friend. And who is there can general a thing like me in the place ?”

Senior decided to take the mine-manager into his confidence. It would be the wisest course. He told him of Searight's appearance in the middle of the night. Mr. Stewart was much interested. “And,” Senior went on, “my wife, hearing a stranger talking to me in the sitting-room, looked through the bedroom door. Well, you know, her nerves have been altogether wrong lately, and when she saw Searight—who looked, I can tell you, a fearful object, dirty and seedy—she took a sudden idea that he was some murderer, or someone going to do for me, and she tried to rush in between us and fainted away on the floor. I was a long time getting her to. Searight was in a most dreadful state. You never saw such a sight ! trembling and shaking at the least noise, his eyes staring out of his head ; he had been drinking a good deal of raw brandy and eating nothing.”

“Did he tell you how they escaped ?” asked Mr. Stewart. “There were five of them I saw by the telegrams in yesterday's paper. The names of the convicts who got away from the train that was taking them down to Cape Town did not appear. I suppose they will to-day. But go on.”

“Well, this is the way,” replied Senior, “he says the thing was managed. One of the convicts, little Jack Jonas, was a great favourite with the boys, and they were determined to try to get the fellow a chance for his liberty. He was one of the seven, you remember, whom Nickolsen the Swede trapped, and he got sentenced the same time as Searight. Well, his friends raised a subscription, and bribed one of the warders to give Jonas a key to open his handcuffs on the evening the convicts left by train. For the big gang of convicts that were sent down there were far too few police. In the division of the carriage in which Jack Jonas was, there was no policeman at all. When they came to that steep incline just the other side of De Aar, where, you know, the train goes no faster than a man can walk, he opened his irons, and then handed the key to the others along with him. Five of them accepted the chance, including Searight, and they then made their escape out of the window, and made straight across the veldt. A policeman who was standing on the platform of

a carriage at the time happened to catch sight of them, and gave the alarm. The train could not be stopped, of course, and even if it had been, none of the police could have been spared to go in pursuit, and so they contented themselves by firing just at random into the darkness in the direction taken by the convicts; and, curiously enough too, a bullet grazed Jack Jonas's ankle, making a nasty flesh wound. The convicts separated for their own safety, excepting Searight and Jonas. I suppose Searight was too scared to like to be left by himself. The I.D.B.s in the know had dispatched some of their crowd with a couple of horses and some brandy, and a change of clothes, to be somewhere near in case Jack Jonas managed to escape at this particular incline. Searight succeeded in getting one of the horses, a bottle of brandy, and a shirt. He kept on the convict trousers and threw away the jacket. It appears that Jonas insisted on separating, so Searight, after spending a night and a half on the veldt, having nothing to subsist on barring the brandy, managed to reach my place at half-past three this morning. Jonas also intended making for Kimberley, he says. Now, what I want to do is to get Searight clear out of this and out of the country at once. You see," and Senior hesitated, "I paid for his defence; it took all the cash I had, £100, and besides having no money now to help him there is the danger of his being searched for in my house, because it is well known I stood by him in his trouble. It is a beastly nuisance the whole thing, and he is such a dreadful outsider, but what can a fellow do? You see, he and I were brother officers at the front years ago. It is not safe, either for his own sake or for mine, to keep him here long. He is nearly mad with fear. He howls at the least thing. He is in a state of the most abject fear. I am frightened to let anyone come near the house. If a knock comes to the door he almost goes into hysterics. I sacked my boy Sixpence at once, before he had the chance of seeing him. My wife and I, after locking all the doors, then cleared out a room which we used as a sort of store-room. We put in a little furniture, made him a shakedown, and gave him a few books to read. But he can't read any; all the time he walks up and down like a caged beast. The worst of it is, he can't be left alone a minute. My wife is with him now. A nice thing to have one's wife locked up in a

room with an escaped convict; but what can a fellow do? But I am glad now I told you, for you'll be able to advise me. What do you think is the best thing to be done?"

Mr. Stewart walked up and down the room. Senior looked at him questioningly. With his tie half on, only in his shirt and trousers, hands in pockets, with his eyes on the floor, he continued his walk reflecting. He, too, had heard of Violet Senior's guilt. Here, he thought, was a young fellow, who had spent all he had, and now bound himself to take part in a prize-fight, by which he would lower his social status in every way, in order to raise money to assist a treacherous scoundrel, who had the unbounded shamelessness to seek his protection after having done him the greatest injury one man can do another. He felt he would like to crush Searight under his heel as he would some venomous insect. Was there not a contrast between these two? He thought of this chivalrous young Englishman standing between an unfaithful wife and this false despicable friend. Tears actually came into the old man's eyes. Yes, he would tell the young fellow everything; he would be the means of delivering an unknown enemy into his hands. Here was a grand opportunity of affording him revenge. And his faithless wife was even in the same room with the cold-blooded brute. By heavens! it was too bad, he must tell him all at once, it was his duty. He stopped and stood before the other.

"Jack Senior," he said, and his voice sounded very grave, "Jack, my lad, I am going to——" And then he stopped, for suddenly he thought of the fight, and he turned and continued his walk with his head still lowered and his hands in his pockets. How would this news affect the other? Would it not be the means of putting any prospect of a pugilistic encounter out of the question? The money borrowed from him would not then be required, and could he then have the heart to keep the young fellow to his bargain under such distressing circumstances? No, it could not be done. Then he began to think of the enjoyment he would have in scheming and arranging this fight, and with such a man as Senior to handle, also. What splendid fun it would be, and the lad could win also; he was certain of that. And after all, would it be right to deal such a blow to the young man's happiness? "Where

ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," and Senior dearly loved his wife.

Then there was wee Harry, too, to think of, and a fine wee chappie he was; it would also reflect upon him. When Searight was out of the way might not the woman reform? He, Mr. Stewart, could speak to her very seriously, let her know that he knew all, what he thought about it, and point out what a manly fellow she had for a husband. Och, no! it would not be right to tell him. Why make him miserable when perhaps there was really no need for it? No, he would not tell him. He stopped again, looked at Senior, and said, "Jack, come back later on. Come to lunch, I'll have thought the whole thing out by that time. Go home, but promise me one thing before you go—that is, not to allow your wife to be in the same room with this low hound. Man, don't ye understand that you must think first of your duty to your own? Mrs. Senior's good name would be ruined for life if it ever transpired that she had been locked up in a room with Searight the convict. Beyond his being an escaped outlaw, he has a fearful bad name all round, especially where women are concerned. Now, Jack, make me this promise. By Goad, there are no two ways about it! No matter how you risk the cur's safety."

Senior, seeing the wisdom of what the other had said, made the promise.

As he walked along, the bargain he had made with the Scotchman in order to help Searight to get away from the country, troubled his mind but little; in fact, he was more pleased than otherwise in having consented. Though he would become a prize-fighter, and the name alone had to him a terribly low association, it would be for the sake of another. True, this other was a worthless scamp, little deserving of such a sacrifice; but when an old comrade had come to him in distress, was it not right that he should help him if he could?

CHAPTER XLIV.

BEFORE returning home, Senior went for a walk beyond the racecourse ; he had much to think of, and wanted to be by himself. It was nine o'clock before he arrived at his house. Violet seemed terribly upset ; it was with difficulty she succeeded in telling him that during his absence May Leslie had been there, and that she had only just gone away. She had tried to make her open the door of Searight's room, refusing to believe that Senior had locked the door and taken the key away. In the morning papers were the names of the runaway convicts, which further stated that some of them were making their way to Kimberley. "May Leslie," Violet cried, "thinks he is here ! I know she does ! She will tell the police !"

"Goodness me, Violet, you are easily frightened," returned Senior ; "May Leslie gone to inform the police ? Why, she would lay down her life for Searight, even though he——"

"Oh, Jack !" Violet interrupted, "you are altogether wrong. She would kill him if she could ; you don't know, oh, you don't know how she hates him !"

"How do you know ? What makes you think that ?" asked he, wonderingly. "My dear girl, you are so nervous that you imagine all kinds of dreadful things." And then, suddenly thinking of the terrible strain and shock the coming fight would be to her, he said, "You must certainly go down to Cape Town for a change at once ; yes, you had better start in a couple of days. Where is Harry ?"

"Out in the yard playing."

"That is right ; keep him out of the way as much as possible. Now give me the key of the room ; I'll go and have a look at Searight. How is he ?"

"Worse than ever ; I could not even get him to wash his face ; he keeps walking up and down all the time ; he won't sit down for a moment."

Senior opened the door and stepped inside, telling Violet to lock it after him and put the key in her pocket.

He found Searight in a dreadful condition, shivering, and his teeth chattering as if he were deathly cold, the

paleness of his face showing through the dirt that was thick on it. The shirt, given him shortly after his escape from the train, once white and starched, was in a most filthy state; the canvas convict-trousers were dust-stained and torn; and with eyes that seemed starting out of his head with terror, he looked most pitiful.

"She has been here! She has been here!" he gasped. "Who?"

"May Leslie. Oh, Jack! save me, get me out of this, as quickly as you can. I have been waiting for you. I thought you were never coming. The police will be here soon now. I'll black my face and try and pass off as a Kaffir if you like—anything, but get me away at once. They will flog me if I am caught. Oh, Jack! Jack!" and then he continued his nervous terrified walk, like a freshly caged wild animal. He had aged twenty years; his face was furrowed and drawn with horror and suspense.

Senior noted with surprise that Searight and Violet both seemed to have the same fixed opinion regarding May Leslie's hate.

"Look here," he said, "I think you are simply frightening yourself unnecessarily. I am sure May Leslie would do her very utmost to help you. Why she is devoted to you. How she tried to assist you at the trial!"

"Oh, my God! Jack, how can you talk like that? I swear to you on my oath, my hon—well, on my mother's grave, that she put these diamonds into my pockets. She and Foxnisky, who is madly in love with her, arranged the whole thing. I would not lie to you at such a time as this. So help me God! I could not. I bought a diamond once—there now, I'll confess to you. It was when you and I were staying at the 'Albion.' You remember that morning you missed the five pounds out of your sovereign purse, after you came back from your walk? Well, I bought a 'stone' from a Kaffir. I sold it to Faganstine. That was the first and last diamond I ever bought. Oh, my God! this woman hates me. Believe me, Jack, I am not lying to you. Why should I? Her confession was only a sham. You have no conception how cunning she is. She fooled Nurish completely. She pretended to him that she was terribly sorry for what she had done. She offered to confess everything, signed an affidavit and all, but all the time she was playing a deep game. She got Nurish

to agree not to call any other witnesses. She made out that she was so fearfully ashamed of having lived with Mosetenstine that she did not want it dragged up in court. Besides she persuaded Nurish that his evidence was worth nothing. He believed that she was madly in love with me still. Oh! she is an actress, the cleverest in the world; she fooled him altogether; she could make a man believe anything she liked. After her confession at the trial she contradicted herself in the cross-examination in such a way as to make the Court and everybody believe she had done her best to get me off by perjuring herself."

"But," said Senior, interrupting, "how do you account for this very sudden bitter hatred? Is there any truth in what Nurish said when he applied for an adjournment—that she had discovered you to be unfaithful? If so, it must surely have been after that Sunday night when I interfered. Why, she went for me like a tigress. Is there a woman at the bottom of it? They say there always is."

Senior noticed the blood rush back to the dirty pale face as the other turned and continued his walk.

"Oh!" after a little pause, "why do you ask me these silly questions now, when the police will be coming any minute? I suppose she must have heard something. I never pretended to be a saint. If you don't care a hang, I suppose I can't help it; but it is a confounded shame, I would not treat you like that if you—you were li-like me," and Searight started to weep, the tears making channels down his begrimed face.

Just then a loud knock, a knock suggestive of demanded admittance, was heard at the front, and Searight squirmed as he exclaimed in horrified accents, "There now! I told you! oh, I told you! I told——"

"Dry up, for God's sake, man!" said the other sharply, "do try and have some little pluck;" then, in a low tone, he called Violet, and whispered, "Don't open the door, pretend there is no one in."

Repeated knocks followed, each time louder, and the handle of the door was shaken roughly, and finally a voice, "Hi! if you don't open the door quick, I'll force an entrance."

Senior himself began to fear that the game was all up.

"Violet, open the door," he whispered through the key-hole, "and say that I am out."

The door was opened, and Senior soon heard a man's voice demanding the key of the room they were in—heard Violet's timid reply, that her husband had it, and he was out—then the other say, "Come now, no lies, I know all about you, you had better be careful. Give me the key at once."

Senior, even in the dread suspense of the moment, wondered what anyone could know about his wife to threaten her.

Then the key was inserted in the lock of the door, and Senior, in a painful state of excitement, forced Searight, who seemed paralysed with fear, into the corner on to the mattress, and was in the act of throwing a blanket over him, when in walked Foxnisky.

"Oh, it is all right, Mr. Senior," he said, "you need not cover him up."

Searight started up out of the corner, and the detective quickly stepped back and raised one hand, and with the other pulled out a revolver, evidently expecting the convict would attack him; but, no, he only threw his arms round Senior, as a child would round its father for protection.

"Jack!" he cried, "save me! Oh, don't let him take me! Don't, Jack! promise me you won't."

And Senior felt strangely moved. He would have given much at that moment to have saved this craven wretch.

"Poor old man!" he said, and his voice trembled. "Ah, poor old chap! I'm afraid it is all up now," and he patted the other's head as if to soothe him in his terrible anguish; then he whispered into his ear, "Hold on, don't despair yet, I'll see if I can't bribe him."

Searight continued, however, to beg Senior not to give him up, when Foxnisky broke in, "For the Lord's sake! hold your row. Try to be as little of a cur as you can. Mr. Senior, I want to talk to you for a few minutes. Come out into the next room. And you, Searight"—sternly—"hold your tongue for a little while. Send your wife out for a walk, Mr. Senior."

Turning to her, Senior said, "Violet, this gentleman and I wish to have a little talk together privately. Put on your hat, and—yes, take Harry, too, for a little while."

Violet looked in an alarmed way at Foxnisky. The latter saw and understood the look—"On my word, nothing, something else." And Senior again wondered, and was mystified. Was there something, a secret something, between Violet and this detective? His mind experienced a troubled, pained sensation.

Searight peered into the room like a scared madman as he heard the door close after Violet. Foxnisky called out to him, "Go inside, sir! do you hear?" and he quickly vanished.

The detective, after locking the door and putting the key in his pocket, placed two chairs close together at the table, and taking one himself, motioned Senior to the other.

CHAPTER XLV.

THREE days later Senior was seated with Mr. Stewart in the latter's sitting-room. Both were smoking, and on the table close to each was a glass containing whisky-and-water.

The Scotchman broke a long silence. "Yes, oh, yes!" he said, as if in answer to some thought, "it is strange indeed. It is quite beyond me."

"What?" asked the other.

"How can you account for this detective fellow, not only not arresting the man, but doing his best to help him to get away clear? Isn't it a puzzler?"

"Well," said Senior, "do you know what I think? I think that Foxnisky is madly in love with May Leslie, and most likely he thinks it would be better for his chance to get Searight away altogether. Perhaps he fears that if he remained in the country a revulsion of feeling might take place in May Leslie, and that she might get to love him again. She used to be terribly fond of Searight, there is no doubt about that. Look how she stuck to him through thick and thin, until all of a sudden her love turned to an intense hate. She must have had very good reason, I expect. I believe it was jealousy of some other woman. He as good as confessed this to me himself. I wonder who she was! Have you heard at all?"

The old Scotchman actually blushed like a school-girl, and conscious of it, too, lifted up his head, put his hand to his throat, as if something were tickling him there, and then began to cough violently to account for the sudden redness of his face.

"What is the matter?" asked Senior. "Something stuck in your throat?" But he saw and wondered at the other's confusion when the question was asked. "Perhaps the old boy has been paying attention in the same quarter too," he thought.

"Oh!" said Mr. Stewart, "I must have swallowed a little juice out of my pipe. The woman? No—— Oh! I expect the scoundrel is mixed up with a good many, if ye ask me. He is a dirty reptile, yon. I am just thankful we have got rid of him. It's no nice to dirty your fingers and run awkward risks for the sake of such vermin. Is it not wonderful how women can see anything in the likes of him? He was a great favourite with them, they tell me."

"Yes, he would be, with a certain lot—barmaids and that class. He is really a good-looking fellow, but I can't conceive a lady—that is, one with any sense—taking a fancy to him, can you?"

Mr. Stewart thought, "Ye little know, my lad!" but he said with some emphasis, "No, indeed!" He then poured some whisky into his tumbler and was about to help his young friend, when the latter quickly caught the decanter by the neck and said, as he shook his head, "No thanks! no thanks! No more for me."

"Just a wee drop. Come on, just to be sociable like. I hate drinking alone. Come on, now!" said the other, as he still held the decanter up.

"All right, to oblige you then; only let me help myself," and Senior, taking the decanter from the other, poured a very little whisky into his glass.

"You'll get drunk if you don't watch it, helping yourself like that," said the Scotchman, laughing. "But what was I going to say? Oh, ay! So you think that Foxnisky is in love with May Leslie, and that is why he wants to get her old lover out of the road? I believe you are right. Man! and I have been puzzling my head over it. Do you know, I am the funniest devil you ever met. Man! I can't understand myself." Here he extended his hands

and laughed quietly. "Ay, I am telling ye, but I am funny! What do you think? I woke up this morning at a little after two, and almost before I knew I was awake, suddenly came into my head the question, Why did Foxnisky want to help this escaped convict? He would not take a bribe, and you said he hated the man too. I thought of everything. My mind revolved round and round it in all ways. As true as death! I got into quite a muddle, until my head got sore wi' thinking. But do ye think I could go to sleep again? No, man, I could not for my life: the thing bothered me so. Ay! I suppose he is afraid a revulsion of feeling might come over her, as you put it, if the chap was in the country near. Well, and it is quite possible, too. Love and hate are near of kin. But fancy a quiet, cool-headed chap like Foxnisky falling in love with a wench in that fashion. Ye would hardly believe it, would ye, now? Though, after all, there is no accounting for men in two things—no matter how sensible they are in others—and that is their belief in the supernatural, and their falling in love. Thank God! neither of them troubles me much. But, now, the next thing we have to see about is this fight. I have already the skeleton of a scheme in my mind; it will only want working out and adding to. It is this——"

"Now, look here, Mr. Stewart," suddenly broke in the other, "I want to talk to you about this very same thing. As a particular favour I am going to ask you to try and arrange this fight without any scheming."

"Why?" and Mr. Stewart fixed his keen, small eyes on Senior.

"Surely it is bad enough for me to become a prize-fighter, without having to descend to all the underhand artifices! I suppose they are customary in order to get on a match in such a way that a soft thing is the result as far as betting goes, but I don't like them; sink that part!"

"Go on," said the Scotchman, still eyeing him narrowly.

"Well, I have no more to say. I am no saint, but I have been brought up as an English gentleman, and consequently can't help having many of the prejudices of the class, wrong or right as they may be; but I know myself I should enter into it with a better heart if everything

were arranged and done in an open way. I suppose I shall be the first gentleman who ever engaged in a regular prize-fight; well, let me show those who go in for this sort of thing that, though I descend to take part in what is considered the very opposite of that which a gentleman should do, you know, it can still be done in a straightforward way."

Mr. Stewart did not reply for some time; he sat thinking. Planning out surprises in all kinds of sport had long been his great hobby, and he had particularly looked forward to the brilliant scheme he had anticipated in conjunction with Senior, upon whom he could thoroughly rely in every way—upon his silence, discretion, his skill and pluck. But after all, as this young fellow said, he was a gentleman. When he came to think of it, he could understand the other's repugnance to be rung in like a dark horse in a race, or like a low pugilist who cares little how he prostitutes his skill as long as he gets a fair share of the money made thereby. The romance of the whole thing, of how Senior had sacrificed his prejudices for the sake of a low brute, simply because he had once been his comrade, pleased him much. Yes, the way Senior wished the match made was only consistent with the whole affair. He was a right-down manly fellah!

The old Scotchman jumped up, extending a hand as he held his head on one side, to express admiration. "By Goad, Jack, ye're a brick! Have your own way, my lad, and I think after all you are quite right, don't ye understand?" And after shaking hands warmly, he resumed his seat.

"But would ye not," he went on presently, "just like me to arrange it so that he challenges you? You see, I could go to him and his backers and make out that you were a conceited lad, and that you might be kidded to fight. Man, they would jump at it! they would lay any odds, ye see, and——"

"But that is just what I do not want," broke in the other. "I agreed to fight him, so let me challenge him like a man."

"All right, my lad, I'll leave it entirely to you. You challenge the man anyhow you like. All I shall do now, don't you understand, will be to raise your stakes. I think £1,000 would be about the right figure. Donnell's

backers would just about be able to raise that nicely. I'll see to the arrangements of the fight, the signing of articles and all that, and of course I'll also look to your interests on the day. And by Goad! I am telling you, you'll lick him sure. Here's tae ye!" and the Scotchman tossed off another glass of whisky.

Senior was partly right as to the reason of Foxnisky's assisting to get Searight away. The detective had, strange to say, found May Leslie grow cooler and cooler to him after the trial of her late lover. This disconcerted him. The flame of her passion for the man was not extinguished, and at any moment might flare up again. Her late anxiety and action to secure his conviction were only the outcome of a fierce jealousy. If, Foxnisky thought, her love for Searight still existed, it was only too probable it would not be long before she confessed the whole of the deep game she had played, and then would be revealed the part he had taken himself. Besides the severe punishment if he were proved guilty, his vanity and pride of reputation made him dread exposure. Even when she had informed him, with nervous hurry, after the escape of the convict was known, that Senior, who had been Searight's only friend in his trouble, had a room locked, how she had heard someone moving within, and of Violet's trepidation when questioned, Foxnisky mistrusted her motive. Perhaps she was anxious to have Searight arrested so that he could not leave the country and be lost to her, or that she might have the opportunity of confessing all and clearing him of guilt. But stronger even than fear was the detective's love. In the event of May Leslie confessing everything, whether he opposed her evidence with or without success, all chance of his ever possessing her would be gone, he would have earned her hate. He therefore determined to help to get Searight out of the country.

He persuaded Senior to send Violet to Cape Town immediately, knowing that this would stop May Leslie's visits to the house. He easily convinced May that her suspicions were unfounded, for it never entered her head that this detective, who had always detested Searight, could have any motive for not arresting him.

He planned the escape himself. Senior at his suggestion had bought a Cape cart and a pair of horses, and

laid in a stock of provisions, consisting chiefly of biscuits and tinned meats. Searight was provided liberally with clothes and blankets. A strange driver, who had but recently returned, was engaged to take him to Delagoa Bay. The man was given to understand that the other was undertaking to run a big parcel of diamonds, so of course great secrecy was necessary.

From Delagoa Bay Searight was to proceed to the island of Mauritius, then to France by a steamboat belonging to a French line trading there, and thence to Spain, between which country and England there was no treaty of extradition. One hundred and fifty pounds were given him to defray his expenses. The whole thing cost Senior five hundred pounds, which were advanced by Mr. Stewart.

Of the other four prisoners who escaped from the train, Jack Jonas was the only other one not recaptured. Like Searight, he went to Delagoa Bay. The necessary expenses to enable him to get there were paid by subscription by the I.D.B.s. From that port he tramped to the De Kaap Gold Fields, and no steps were taken to have him re-arrested by the authorities of Griqualand West.

May Leslie sold up her bar, "The New Dug Out," and obtained an engagement in a theatrical company at Durban, Natal. Foxnisky applied for leave, and followed her.

CHAPTER XLVI.

JIM DONNELL, the champion pugilist of South Africa, kept a sparring saloon in Pniel Road, just below that notorious I.D.B. haunt, the "Scarlet Bar."

The saloon was a tolerably spacious square building of corrugated iron. In large letters over the door were the words:

"THE CHAMPION'S RETREAT."

In the centre of the room was the boxing ring, consisting of eight stakes and two lines of ropes. Above it were three large billiard lamps, suspended from the beams that supported the roof. Round the walls were numerous photographs of noted prize-fighters, stripped to the waist

and standing in pugilistic attitude, and other prints appertaining to the sporting world.

A few forms and chairs were scattered about. In one of the far corners was a small bar, plain of make and unornamented, and in another was a partition made of a light wooden frame covered with gaudy chintz. This was the champion's bedroom, and also served as a dressing-room on Saturday nights for the youngsters aspiring to pugilism, who stripped and did their best to smash one another for a few shillings and the amusement of the patrons of the "manly art" in Kimberley.

Jim Donnell was sitting amongst a small crowd of his admirers, legs crossed and thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, holding forth on the respective merits of J. L. Sullivan, Jake Kilrain of America, and Jem Smith of England. He was dressed in a loud check suit. On his large head and inclined to one side was a small hard felt hat. He shaved clean. Well in the corner of his mouth was a cigar, which he both smoked and chewed. At a table, a little distance off, was a party of six playing hazards, from which were frequently coming angry words of disputation. A pretty, slight, off-coloured girl, with bright eyes and dazzling white teeth, presided over the bar, and was successfully entertaining two young Colonials, who were loudly laughing from time to time at the jokes and repartee the girl gave forth in a high-pitched voice.

The champion's tale to Mr. Stewart about his anxiety to return to his wife and family in the States had been pure fiction; Kimberley he found too congenial a place to leave. Sonna, the barmaid, was credited with being the sharer of his domestic joys. Whenever he got intoxicated, which happened not unfrequently, he administered physical chastisement to her, and the poor little girl seemed to like the professor of the "noble art" all the more for thus showing his masterfulness.

The customers and patrons of "The Champion's Retreat" were principally composed of I.D.B.s, manufacturers of "schlenter" diamonds, card-sharpers, thieves of all kinds, and, the most degraded wretches of all, informers, who thieved as much as any of them, but, by the heartless treachery of secretly betraying their comrades, preserved their own liberty.

The I.D.B.s were of the lowest of their order; they were those who bought straight from the Kaffir thieves and touts. In most cases they were the agents of the respectable licensed diamond-buyer.

Foremost amongst Jim Donnell's patrons were low East End Londoners, whose lips were fruitful of the impurest language and blood-curdling blasphemy, from which horrible vocabulary they filled up the oft-recurring pauses caused by their limited knowledge of words expressive of any connection or meaning. With their evil, cunning countenances, flashy clothes, and large diamonds sparkling conspicuously on their unwashed coarse hands, they were indeed repulsive.

Jim Donnell was their king, their hero. A man who could smash any one of them in a couple of minutes was one to be looked up to, to be admired. And the pugilist liked his position, and the power he held amongst them, which, too, in his eyes was only the due of a fighting man of his class and calibre.

One Barney Moses now entered the saloon with a letter for Jim Donnell. He applied the adjective "bleeding" to the missive, which he handed to the other. This expression seemed a favourite one amongst them all; nearly everything they spoke of, or alluded to, was apparently in a peculiar state of blood.

Jim Donnell read the letter; then he jumped up, pouring forth a deluge of profanity—half Cockney, half American. Innumerable were the calamities he prayed that heaven might send his eyes, his very life, so as to express in a fitting way that he had received a great surprise. Gambling was stopped and everyone gazed towards him, anxiously waiting.

"Here, boys, listen to this. I'll read it out."

"June 30th, 188—.

"MR. JIM DONNELL,

"Champion Pugilist of South Africa,

"DEAR SIR,—I hereby challenge you to fight me for £1,000 a side, with skin gloves, under the rules of the London Prize-ring, within two months of above date.

"If you feel inclined to accept this challenge I shall be at the Craven Hotel to-morrow night, at eight o'clock, and shall be prepared to make a deposit of a hundred and

fifty pounds with any person mutually agreed upon, so as to bind the match.

"To prevent too much publicity, and in order to make the preliminary arrangements as quickly as possible, I would suggest that it would be advisable for each to have only one friend to-morrow night at the Craven Hotel.

"In the event of the match being settled I hope all further details will be amicably arranged and that no effort will be made by either side to obtain any undue advantage.—Yours faithfully,

"JOHN SENIOR."

Then loud were the oaths of astonishment the reading of this epistle caused them all. Many were the speculative theories as to what had put it into this young fellow's head to suffer certain defeat, and the loss of either his or his friends' money. Doubts were freely expressed as to the genuineness of the writer's intentions. Much liquor was called for. Numerous were the offers to subscribe handsomely to the stakes in the event of the challenge being no "schlenter" one. The hundred and fifty pounds were collected then and there to make the first deposit, for much money passed through the hands of these men, though they accumulated little. "Come easy, go easy," was their motto. They gambled away their earnings in high stakes, and their living altogether was of the most riotous order. The excitement grew intense, and nothing but fighting was talked of. It was four in the morning before the drunken champion sought his pillow, after having beaten Sonna unmercifully.

The match was satisfactorily arranged to come off in six weeks, articles of agreement being signed by Donnell and Senior. Referee and stakeholder were appointed; first deposit of £150 was made; then the second of £350 two weeks later. All possible chance of the affair falling through was put to an end by the final deposit of £500 being made good by both parties on the day appointed.

The forthcoming battle created great excitement throughout the whole of the Diamond Fields. It was looked upon as a battle between representatives of different countries—America *versus* England; of different classes of the community—I.D.B.s against their denouncers; a rough

against a gentleman; lower-class Jews against the higher; for, curiously, the principal backers of both men belonged to the chosen people.

The authorities would not interfere, as gloves were to be used—it was not deemed necessary to acquaint them that these were only ordinary kid gloves.

Miners were divided in their sympathies, and many were the fights they had over their cups whilst discussing the merits of the two men. Clergymen, who called attention in their pulpits to “this evil in our midst,” could not help showing a strong feeling of partisanship. Judges, thieves, publicans, parsons, all classes became intensely interested.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A YOUNG nurse stood by the entrance to the hospital in Du Toits Pan Road, Kimberley. It was eight in the morning; the weather was bright and clear, with a faint touch of frost in the air.

Horsemen, cabs, buses, dog-carts, well-laden with eagerly-talking occupants, were all making their way in one direction. The nurse well knew where. It was to see a fierce struggle between two of their fellow-creatures, and she was feverish with a hungry desire to follow them. One of the combatants was the man whom she had loved so constantly. The motive for his taking part in a prize-fight troubled her little, her mind was too full of the fact. Nurse Dorothea had heard of Violet's guilt—for many things are talked of in hospitals—and her jealousy of the wife, against which she had vainly struggled, disappeared before her heartfelt sorrow for the man.

Gaily dressed in a check suit, specially ordered for this occasion, Mr. Stewart, pulling on a new pair of kid gloves, sallied from his house. A cab was waiting at the gateway.

“What! another telegram?” he anxiously exclaimed as one of the educated Kaffir messengers of Kimberley handed him an envelope of brickish tint.

“Yes. Another one for Mr. Senior,” returned the native. “Mr. Stewart take it too?”

“Yes, all right. Cabby, I'll be out the now!” and the

Scotchman re-entered his house. In ten minutes' time he returned. In spite of previous bright anticipations Mr. Stewart's face now wore a grave, perplexed look. As he jumped into the cab he muttered, "*But I'll take fine care he does not hear of it until afterwards.* What a wonder! after it's gone all this length! Ach! but it's just the best thing that could have happened for him, after all!"

"I beg pardon, sir?" said the driver, whipping up his horses.

"Who the devil's talking to you?" asked the old Scotchman fiercely. "Here, where are you driving to? Did I not tell you to call at the club for Captain Wall? Fine thing if we went out without a referee!"

In due time Mr. Stewart, accompanied by Captain Wall, reached the battle-ground, which had been chosen just beyond the border of the Orange Free State, six miles from Kimberley, two hundred yards from a wayside canteen, named after its proprietor "Barney Martin's." The ring was pitched at the bottom of a rise that hid the hostelry from view. The right of gate-money having been sold by agreement of both parties to the highest bidder, Faganstine and Tinlin had obtained it. To prevent people from seeing without paying, these enterprising sharpers had put up an enclosure of wood and canvas round the 24-ft. ring. Outside it a deep wide ditch had been dug to prevent cabs from coming close enough for a view to be obtained by looking over. Faganstine and Tinlin, assisted by ten roughs armed with knobkerries, kept the entrance. Two sovereigns was the charge for admission.

The contest had been billed to start at nine a.m. Now as that hour approached, vehicles of all sorts were arriving, and crowding round the enclosure.

Senior had spent the night at Barney Martin's, acting according to advice from Mr. Stewart, who had wished him to escape the cold drive in the early morning from the camp.

At a quarter to nine Jim Donnell, accompanied by Ikey Mosetenstine, his chief backer and chosen umpire, Dooley and Joe the Brum, his two seconds, drove up in grand style in a cart gaily decorated with flags, and drawn by four spanking greys. The pugilist made his way, followed by the others, to the ring-side, tossed his hat over the ropes, and then stepped inside himself. Loud were the

shouts that greeted his appearance. The I.D.B.s shook him cordially by the hand.

By this time there was a dense crowd inside. Planks of deal resting on barrels were packed and bending. All the I.D.B.s had congregated near the corner of the ring towards the sun, taking for granted that their champion would win the toss for choice of corners.

Right opposite were Senior's principal backers and sympathisers, chief among whom were many of the better-class Jews, the spectacled refined faces of those hailing from Germany being conspicuous.

Leonard, owing to a sudden attack of camp fever, and much to his chagrin, was unable to leave his bed.

All representatives of the community were present. Men who would have been indignant sometime before if told they would ever go to a prize fight, had been irresistibly drawn to see the event that had been the chief interest of men, women, and children on the Diamond Fields. Even the two members of Parliament, Mr. Roseoper and Aron Jaco, had rushed up from Cape Town to view the battle, quite heedless of their legislative duties. Many were pale and trembling from mere anticipation.

Suddenly a wild shout went forth, as Senior's hat was thrown into the "magic circle." Then the young Englishman stepped into the ring followed by Mr. Stewart and two burly Cornish miners, who were to act respectively as second and bottle-holder. The old Scotchman had carefully drilled them in the art of carrying their principal to his corner at the conclusion of a round. Besides being Senior's umpire, he was going to do all the necessary advising himself.

Senior felt in the best of form, which was more than he had expected, for his training had been much retarded by disquieting news of his wife's health. Violet's nerves, always highly strung, had been completely shattered by the terrible suspense she had undergone of late. Then shortly after her arrival in Cape Town she had taken a cold, which apparently, in her weak state, she had been unable to shake off. News at one time was so alarming that Senior had informed Mr. Stewart that if he did not hear better accounts very shortly, he would have to go to Cape Town; in which case he would realise sufficient of his capital in England to pay the other what he owed him, and also any loss his backers might sustain by his with-

drawal from the match. Happily the next report brought better tidings, and his wife's health from that time seemed to steadily improve. A week before the day appointed for the contest, Senior had received a letter from Violet herself, full of loving expressions and admiration for his "heroism," as she termed it. Little Harry, too, had sent his message. Senior read her letter over and over again. He felt he loved his wife and brave little son with all his heart and soul. This morning he was like a race-horse in condition, full of dancing, animal spirits. The prospect of the coming struggle had brought something of that pleasurable excitement which a schoolboy experiences when he is about to play his first cricket-match in the first eleven. He neither thought of winning nor losing, he was only conscious of a joyous feeling, as if his whole nature were responding to the pure blue African sky and the bracing winter air. His conscience had been quite at rest since the match was made—was not his motive for entering into it chivalrous!

Amid much cheering the Englishman went up to Donnell and shook hands, wishing him a polite "good-morning." He made some remarks about the glorious day. The American felt shy at the other's superior manner. Mr. Stewart and Ikey Mosetenstine now went to the centre of the ring to toss for choice of corners. The Scotchman spun a sovereign in the air. Ikey called out "a voman." Both stooped down eagerly as the coin fell. "I've von, I've von!" cried the I.D.B. excitedly, and Donnell's party cheered—though they thought it but a matter of little importance whether their man had the sun in his eyes or not; they looked upon the affair as a foregone conclusion—a positive certainty.

Whilst the I.D.B.s and bookmakers began to call out briskly "I'll li' two to one, two to one I'll li'!" Mr. Stewart tied Senior's colours, a small Union Jack, to the centre stake on the left-hand side of his "corner."

Ikey Mosetenstine, after carefully watching how this was done, proceeded in like manner to tie Donnell's colours, a small flag, the Stars and Stripes of America. These preliminaries were watched with much interest, and received with cheers and counter-cheers. Then a line was drawn across the centre of the ring from one unoccupied corner to the other.

"That is the 'scratch,'" Aron Jaco said, in answer to

an inquiry from an old Scotchman, an elder of the Presbyterian Church of Kimberley; and the millionaire further explained that when time was called after each round, the men had to "toe it."

The referee, Captain Wall, then stepped into the ring, and taking off his hat, made a neat little speech, carefully prepared and rehearsed beforehand—the gist of this oration being an exhortation to the men to fight fairly, and a request to the spectators to keep order and refrain from any unbecoming acts of partisanship.

Loud approving shouts answered the appeal.

The men, throwing off their ulsters, stripped to the waist. Senior wore silk hose, and high boots made of buckskin, soft and light. Donnell had on the orthodox fighting-breeches, ornamented with pearl buttons just below the knee. His shoes were light canvas ones. Neither wore spikes, the ground being too hard.

Much amusement and curiosity were aroused when Senior's seconds, under the supervision of Mr. Stewart, rubbed the Englishman's head and upper part of back and shoulders with oil. The idea was that in the event of the American, who was much the heavier of the two, getting his head in "chancery," he would be better able to slip out of the grasp.

Just then the Malay and other coloured drivers, having been worked up to an abnormal pitch of excitement, tore down a portion of the enclosure and clambered through. In vain Faganstine, Tinlin, and their gang threw themselves into the breach; the rush was too strong, they had to accept the inevitable and let them in. However, it did not matter much, everyone who could afford it had already paid for admission.

The men then donned the kid gloves, which had half the length of the fingers cut off, so as to allow the easy clinching of the fist. They were fastened by pieces of tape round the wrist. The referee ordered them to shake hands; this was done; seconds shaking hands at the same time over their principal's arms, thus forming a cross.

In breathless silence "time" was called. Both men sprang up from their bottle-holders' knees, and "toed the scratch."

The appearance of each was eagerly scanned. Senior looked in perfect condition—his fair skin glowed with ruddy health, his eyes were bright and clear. Everyone

I.D.B.s and all, gave vent to murmuring expressions of admiration and surprise at his beautiful physical proportions. He was not what would be called a very muscular-looking man—that is to say, his muscles did not stand out in hard lumps; though large and well developed, they appeared supple and elastic, as he stood in graceful pose working his arms in and out easily and smoothly. According to the Scotchman's instructions, he had been closely cropped and clean shaven. With his round, well-shaped head, broad jaws, short thick neck, powerful shoulders, deep chest, and well-developed pectoral muscles, strong arms, long in the biceps and big in the forearm, the well-developed thighs springing out of the narrow but deep muscular hips, the tapering calves, small ankles, broad, high-insteped foot, he looked the model of an athlete, the beau-ideal of a gladiator, combining strength with perfect symmetry.

He did not force a smile to show his nonchalance, but the expression of his face was full of brightness and confidence. The American was tall and lanky, his shoulders sloping but broad, his chest large and yet flat; his arms were strongly made and very long, but his lower limbs were weedy and unshapely. The face was that of the typical prize-fighter—low receding forehead, small keen sunken eyes, broad strong jaws, short thick powerful neck, and a nose much flattened by repeated knocks.

His position was easy and graceful. He stood nearly square, and carried his head well up. A contemptuous smile was on his face. He thought it was a very easy business for him. The fight would last but very few rounds. He had expressed this opinion freely beforehand; declaring, in fact, that he was much afraid of being had up afterwards for manslaughter.

Senior stood more side on, and in order to have only one side of his face exposed to his opponent's attack, he kept his head to the right, and his chin lowered.

Donnell seemed anxious to begin; he knew he was expected by his friends to defeat the other in very short order, and this knowledge had much to do with the reckless tactics he adopted. Senior kept moving steadily to his left, to keep the slanting rays of the still low sun out of his eyes, and waiting for the attack.

The American suddenly made a wild rush, and the Englishman shot out his left with all his force, meeting

him full in the left eye. It was a terrific hit, for Senior was a phenomenally hard hitter, and the other had collided with all his weight against the blow. Donnell, in wild rage at the unexpected visitation, persevered in his rushing tactics only to be met with another smash on the same eye. But still trying to bore his way in, he got a little closer, and rained blows apparently all over his opponent. Being, however, a little out of distance, they were ineffectual. Senior continued retreating, until at length he was cornered, when he dropped, after receiving a blow on the chest, wishing to avoid close quarters with his heavier antagonist.

The I.D.B.s, seeing the Englishman fall under a shower of blows, were much elated. Great was their surprise when Mr. Stewart suddenly called out, "I claim first blood." Yet there it was, trickling down Donnell's cheek, from a cut under the eye. Through their champion having his back to them they had not seen the two smashing blows he had received in his rushes.

Senior walked to his corner, declining to be carried there, thinking that the picking up and jostling of his excited seconds would do more harm than good. His friends cheered lustily at their champion's early success. The I.D.B.s, to show their confidence, still offered two to one, and found a few more takers.

Now, Donnell, though really a clever pugilist, had made a most grievous mistake. In the first place, by not paying that strict attention to his training which he would have done had he expected to meet in the lists a good man, much superfluous flesh had been left on his face; and then—through underrating his small opponent, crediting him with having no idea at all of the pugilistic art, he had given the other a splendid opportunity of scoring. Instead of feinting to draw Senior, in order to get some idea of his measurement, he had rushed as recklessly as a drunken navvy in a street brawl. When he came up for the second round, to the dismay and astonishment of his supporters, his left eye was on the point of closing. This, instead of steadying, only exasperated him. Losing his head completely, he continued his wild rushes, urged on, too, by the excited yells of his friends and seconds. Senior waited for him each time, and, assisted by his impetuosity, met him with straight left-handers full of crushing force. After four rounds, the American, through his reckless

tactics, had made his chances of victory remote indeed. Both his eyes were in danger of closing, and he grew wilder and wilder.

Senior continued boxing in the same careful way, contenting himself with counter-hitting, and when pressed to the ropes, going down after receiving a blow, so as to avoid close quarters. He was fighting according to previous orders minutely explained by the old Scotchman, who never offered to say a word now, being anxious to leave well alone.

The Englishman's friends kept shouting themselves hoarse, so pleased were they with their champion's success.

The I.D.B.s looked blue indeed! Many were the claims of "Foul! Foul!" "Down without a blow!" they yelled out. Headed by Ikey Mosetenstine, they ramped and raved at the referee from time to time, accusing him of unfairness.

Captain Wall took no notice; he smiled blandly as he repeated sententiously each time, "Fair; fight on."

One round Senior's friends felt some anxiety, when Donnell, after feinting with the left, to which the other ducked, brought a powerful swinging uppercut with the right fair on the point of the Englishman's jaw, dropping him like a log to the ground.

"First knock-down! First knock-down!" cried the I.D.B.s vociferously, who became a little more hopeful. The claim was allowed. This time Senior had to be carried to his corner.

"Has he dazed you?" asked old Stewart anxiously.

"Yes, a little; but it is passing away quickly."

"Oh, that's all right; but take it easy in going up."

When "time" was shouted, Donnell came up smartly, but Senior sat still.

"Hi! send your man up, there!" was loudly cried by the I.D.B.s.

"Time!" was again called, and Senior left his corner, now scarcely feeling the effects of the blow. But to be on the safe side, he danced away out of reach, as lightly as a cat, whilst the other, nearly blind, blundered after him. Donnell, at last, in despair, went to the centre of the ring, folded his arms, and sighed deeply. "I say, mister," he said, "guess it looks like we were here for sprint racing; what say, now, if we do a little fighting for a change?"

This pleasantry, under the circumstances, evoked some amusement and admiration.

Senior accepted the invitation, came close, and as Donnell held his hands up, leant his head forward to draw the attack on himself. The American was thus induced to lead off. Senior avoided the delivery by ducking to the right, countering Donnell at the same time very heavily on the nose, and breaking away, with the big fellow after him. At length he was cornered. The American made a desperate effort to land a swinging left-hander. Senior, however, "slipped," and passing under the other's blow, came up behind him. Counter-hits with the left then took place, both missing, and Donnell managed to grab his opponent in his long arms, but Senior cleverly "slipped to grass," out of harm's way.

The American stood over the prostrate Englishman, and lifted up his foot as if to kick him, but thinking better of it he desisted, and then loudly claimed a foul on the ground that the other had gone down without a blow.

"Quite fair," replied the referee; "a man can slip down in grips."

Donnell called upon Senior to stand up and fight like a man, and went to his corner swearing.

In the next round the American again caught the Englishman round the waist with both arms. Everyone expected to see the little man dashed heavily to the ground. But Senior, quickly passing his arm round his opponent's neck, nimbly turned, got him on his hip, threw him a fair cross-buttock, and, still retaining his hold, fell across the big fellow's loins, making him grunt loudly.

Senior was in perfect form; he fought splendidly. All the cleverness, all the "ring tactics," were on his side. Donnell had, from the start, boxed unscientifically.

The Englishman now assumed the offensive and planted blows repeatedly on the other's body and face, seldom receiving a return or counter.

The American became completely demoralised, and giving up all hope, sent word round by Dooley to tell his backers to try to get their money off, for he was afraid he was a beaten man. The I.D.B.s felt bitterly crushed. Ruin stared them in the face. Capital was required to carry on their criminal vocation, and nearly all of them had wagered every penny they possessed, and many had wagered more—they thought it such a certainty. Donnell's advice to hedge now, too, they knew to be absolutely impracticable. Dooley, to tell the truth, was secretly glad of the thrashing his principal was getting, feeling that it

reflected less discredit on his having been defeated by the same man.

Mr. Stewart, rubbing his hands together, the expression on his face being one of keenest satisfaction, kept saying in a funny, laughing, highly pitched tone, "Didn't I tell ye! Didn't I tell ye!"

But still the American came up round after round, for this bully, this woman-beater, had great physical courage, a quality less often allied to principle than is generally supposed.

Then the young Englishman got heartily sick of the contest. He had received too little punishment to have the "devil" in him roused, and the pluck of his game antagonist touched his heart. He had used his right but little, principally in delivering right-hand body blows, and now to end the affair he began "cross-countering" the other's left with his right; but, owing to Donnell's height, the blow always landed too high, catching him on the upper part of the head, instead of the angle of the jaw at which he aimed. In the thirty-second round Senior, advised by the Scotchman, was going to try hard for a "knock-out."*

They had been battling now for about an hour. Donnell came up. His face was bruised and battered, his sides heaved painfully, so tired and winded was he with his exertions in forcing the fight.

Senior approached. The other doggedly but hopelessly awaited his attack. To show his gameness, he still tried to force a smile, but on his swollen, distorted features it assumed the aspect of a horrible grin, painful to see.

The I.D.B.s had in their wrath and disgust been throwing vile epithets at the Englishman. Barney Moses, who had been distinguishing himself in this direction by his brutal coarseness—he had wagered £400 more than he could pay—now yelled out to Donnell, asking him derisively

* A "knock-out" is a blow that renders a man insensible. This result is the more easily attained by a hit delivered on that part of the jaw close to the chin, called by boxers "the point." Through the extra leverage gained in shaking the head here, temporary concussion generally follows if the blow has any force, and the receiver drops to the ground insensible. Though seeming dreadful to those unaccustomed to such sights, bearing as it does a close resemblance to death, really no physical harm is done; the man suffers no pain, does not even remember getting the blow, and usually recovers consciousness in a few seconds.

if he called himself "a fighter" when he could not beat "a little cur" like that? Then in the most abominable language he connected Violet's and Searight's names together.

Senior feinted, and was just in the act of pulling himself together for a terrific swing with the right for the "point," when down dropped his hands, and he staggered, uttering a sharp cry as if a sudden pang had stabbed his heart.

The spectators, even many of those who were backing Donnell, cried "Shame, shame," and "Silence, you scoundrel." The foulest blow of the many foul blows recorded in the history of the prize-ring had been delivered. Like a flash of lightning the truth came upon this man who had felt in the morning such an overwhelming love for his wife. The bright sunshine, the sweet blue of the sky that had penetrated and flooded his soul, were ruthlessly dispelled, and a cold, dark despair took their place, paralysing his nerves and strength, but maddening his brain into a startling activity that concentrated itself on one thing—an absolute conviction of his wife's guilt. With electric rapidity numerous little incidents rushed through his mind, fitting themselves into links of horrid connection terribly clear of meaning. But though he saw Violet as she was—hollow, heartless, and vicious—a sad yet overpowering yearning came over him for the woman, and little Harry, too, his son and hers. "Oh, Violet! Violet!" his heart cried out, as bitter tears of blood dropped from it.

And a silence born of amazement fell upon all.

Then the I.D.B.s, recovering from their surprise at seeing the Englishman with pale face, dazed look, bent forward, with arms hanging down, began to yell in high falsetto voices, like infuriated women, and, amidst the most dreadful oaths, shouted to Donnell to go in and smash him.

Senior stood motionless; he heard nothing, he saw nothing, only his mind was full of his false wife.

At last Donnell, brought to his senses by the wild shouts of his friends, made a feint, fearing a ruse on the other's part; but Senior took no notice, and with left and right the American sent him to the ground. Indescribable was the consternation of Senior's friends; wild the delight of the I.D.B.s. The betting had gradually veered round from two to one on to thirty to one against Donnell. Now the American's friends cried out, "Where is your thirty to one? Ah! ah! ah!"

Old Stewart felt fearfully anxious; well he knew what the blow was that had stunned the other, but he was in hopes Senior would quickly come to his senses. With cunning, the Scotchman, as he bathed the Englishman's head, spoke words of encouragement. Pretending that his principal had hit the other, he said, "Man, you are doing splendid, I'm telling ye, another smack like that and he is out. Bring your right round on the 'point' once more and the fight is over. Ah, I'm telling ye, don't ye understand?"

Time was again called. Senior, raised from his bottleholder's knee, went up to the scratch, and mechanically held his hands in position.

The excitement was tremendous. Donnell, to whom some brandy had been given, felt new life, and quickly started the attack with left and right, raining blows on the other's face and neck, until down Senior fell again, and was carried to his corner.

Fortunately much of the American's strength was wasted, and his blows lacked force. Shouts, yells, oaths, came from the I.D.B.s, and offers were freely made of twenty to one on Donnell, whose eyes were now re-lanced, three I.D.B.s taking it in turn in trying to suck out the bruised blood. Hats were tossed in the air, and his friends struck up the refrain of a comic song well known to them all, "Get away from de window, you saucy leettle nigger." How horribly discordant to Senior's friends this singing sounded! Blank and white were their faces as they saw Donnell gaining in freshness and strength.

Old Stewart was deathly pale. In vain he implored Senior "never to mind what that dirty little cur had said; everyone knew that his wife was as pure as the driven snow." But the Englishman heard not. In his despair Mr. Stewart opened a small penknife and prodded the dazed man in the legs, but though Senior winced, the dreamy, dazed look still remained in his face. The Presbyterian elder, his brain turned with excitement, got up, and swore, and yelled strings of meaningless words at Donnell, and demanded that he should not strike the Englishman; and the I.D.B.s laughed. A young German Jew fainted from sheer agitation and fell to the ground. Not the least notice was taken of him, everyone was enwrapped in the scene before him.

"Time" was called, and Senior again pushed up.

Donnell hit him when and where he liked. The Englishman covered his head with his arms and turned his back; then his opponent punished him severely about the body. The I.D.B.s called out jeeringly, "Look at the funk; there is your gentleman fighter for you. Oo! Oo! Oo!" and they groaned and hooted at him.

Many of Senior's friends felt each blow, and shivered as it landed on their champion. How they twisted their bodies—jerked their arms and shoulders in unconscious imitation of the American pugilist! Some yelled out to Stewart to throw up the sponge before his man was killed, and the old Scotchman, with grief-stricken face, answered, "Then, by Goad! he will just have to be killed before I throw up the sponge."

The I.D.B.s yelled, danced, hugged and kissed one another in their brutish delight.

Donnell tried hard now to "knock out" his antagonist. Repeatedly he aimed swinging right-handers; Senior, however, with dim instinct, protected his jaw with his arms. The American, with a swinging hit, landing behind the other's neck, pulled him forward on his face, and Senior was again carried to his corner.

Barney Moses, loud above the shouts of his screeching friend, cried out, "It wis me as did it! Bli me! I 'it 'im on the right spot! I won the fight!" And again in horrible language he alluded to Violet and Searight.

"Searight! SEARIGHT! Ah!" Senior gave a start. Suddenly to the mind of the dazed man murderous thoughts rushed in, and a madness filled his soul. The old Scotchman, now losing all control over himself, swore at Senior, called him "cur" and "scoundrel." But the Englishman was quite heedless.

Aron Jaco, who had made a resolution not to bet, as he did not want his full enjoyment of the "mill" interfered with by thoughts of probable losses, was now tempted to seize the opportunity of betting on a certainty. He stood up and cried out, in a voice hysterical from excitement, "I'll lay sixty to three on Donnell! I'll lay eighty to three! I'll lay one hundred to three!"

Old Stewart, in the poignancy of his disappointment, yelled back, "I'll take your hundred to three, there now!"

"How often?" cried the other.

"As often as you dam well like!"

"All right, I'll lay it to you fifty times."

"It's a bet!" shrieked Stewart.

Yes, the fight was practically over, everyone could see it. "Time" was again called.

To the utter bewilderment of all, Senior, with the mad thought possessing his brain that he was about to meet Searight, to tear and rend him to pieces, sprang from his bottle-holder's knee and rushed upon his antagonist. With superhuman strength he sent in crushing blows, left and right, "blick," "blick," sounding like a butcher's chopper on flesh, till the American fell forward senseless, as if shot, into his arms. Quickly the Englishman passed his left arm underneath the other's arm-pits, and, with the right, dealt smashing blows on the terribly disfigured face.

The man lay perfectly unconscious. With loosened limbs, bent knees, and arms hanging down, he looked for all the world like the corpse that some of the horrified spectators really believed him to be. A deep, awed silence fell upon them as they gazed, fascinated, at the ghastly spectacle. Their lowest animal feelings were aroused and appealed to in a frightful degree. Ah, that innate cruelty implanted by Nature for the selection of the races, for the survival of the fittest!

Truly prize-fighting is a brutal sport; and yet there is something noble, something heart-stirring in it, and only those who possess a curious mixture of the noble and the brute can excel in this ferocious pastime, so emblematical of the Anglo-Saxon race, who originated it; whose sturdy brutishness and noble courage have made them push all over the globe, conquering and robbing the nations.

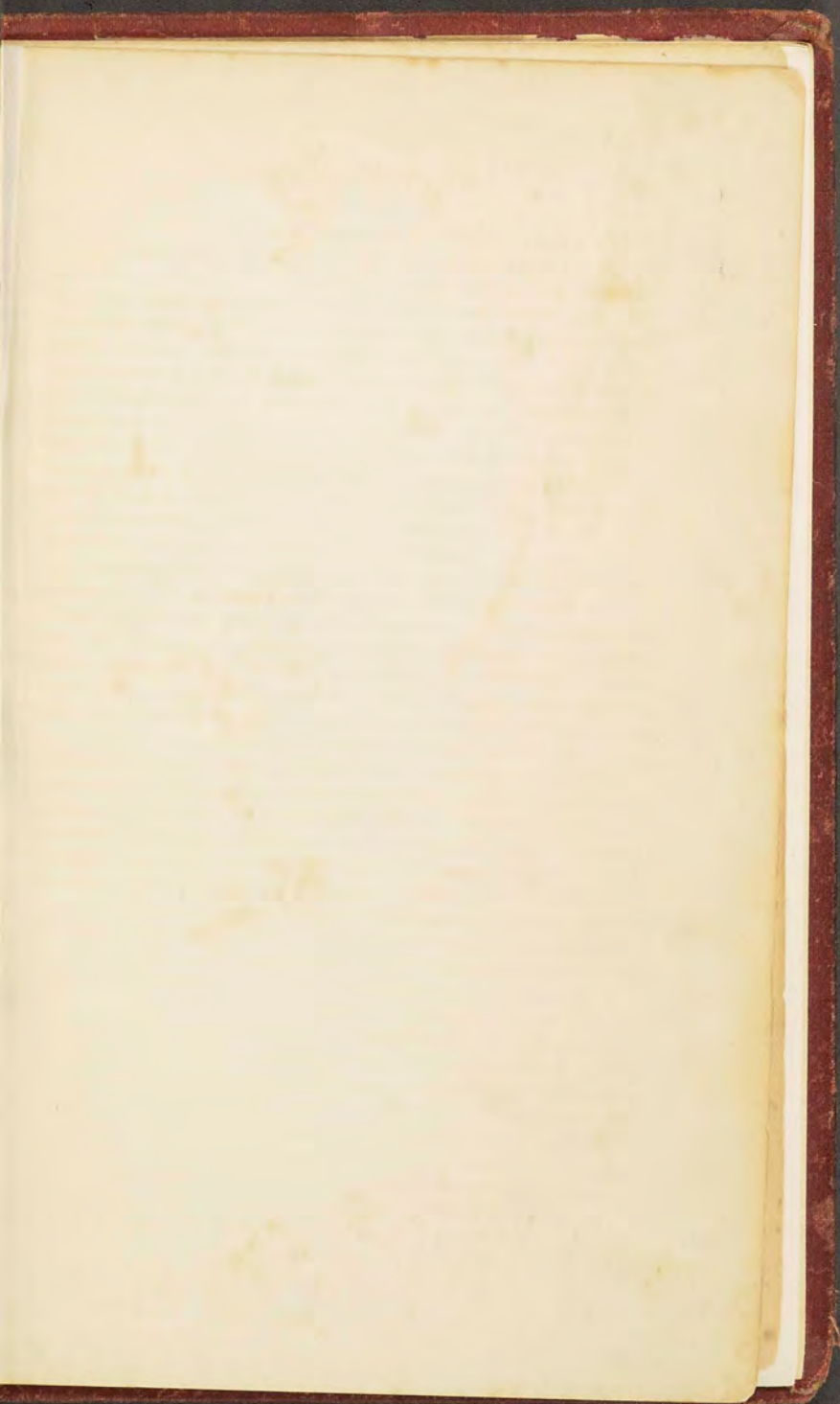
Mr. Stewart was the first of the terror-stricken crowd to recover presence of mind. Thrilling with an intense joy at this sudden and unexpected termination of the battle, he sped to the opposite corner.

"For God's sake throw up the sponge! throw up the sponge! The man 'll be killed and we'll all be had up for manslaughter. Throw up the sponge, you fool! you fool! you dam fool!"

Dooley, with open mouth and horrified face, stooped down mechanically, picked the sponge out of the blood-stained water in the bucket, and tossed it high in the air.

Not a cheer went up at this signal of the Englishman's victory; all were spellbound, every eye was riveted on the tragic scene.

Stewart, followed by the two Cornish miners, rushed





Suddenly a girl, beautiful and sad, dressed in the garb of the Kimberley hospital nurse, rushed forward and threw her arms round his neck.—Page 399.

into the ring, and throwing themselves on Senior, dragged his victim away from him.

Dooley and Joe the Brum then stretched the unconscious American out, and bathed his battered face with water, but he showed no sign of reviving.

A doctor among the spectators had the man carried to the canteen, and followed to attend him.

Senior looked about him in a dazed manner, and Stewart, full of the glorious triumph of the victory, blended with glad thoughts of the big wager he had at the very last moment won from Aron Jaco, was hugging the young Englishman, seemingly only able to say, in a falsetto voice, "By Goad, eh! by Goad, eh!"

Barney Moses, who, amongst others, had drawn near to gaze on the hero of the hour, alluded in bitter, whining tones to his ruin, and spoke in vile terms of Donnell, whom he blamed as the cause of it.

Senior started; his brain, though dulled, recognised the brutal voice that had so coarsely communicated to him the conviction of his wife's sin. Quickly throwing aside the old Scotchman, he made towards the speaker, whose eyes dilated with terror. He would have fled, but the crowd hemmed him in. Smash went Senior's right, and down dropped the I.D.B.; his hitherto prominent nasal organ crunched, broken, and bleeding. Then Senior, in his fury, would have jumped on him, but some of the bystanders threw themselves down and bent over the prostrate man to shelter him. Senior began to fling them to one side and hit out left and right. The crowd fled—for his strength seemed colossal—and he advanced to the senseless form. Mr. Stewart, with intrepidity, threw himself in front of the demented husband, who, with bloodstained body, and wild madness in the eyes that glared out of his swollen face, looked like a fiend incarnate. A heavy blow on the chest sent the Scotchman reeling.

Now Senior was going to kill Barney Moses, and a thrill of horror ran through the throng.

Suddenly a girl, beautiful and sad, dressed in the black garb of the Kimberley hospital nurse, rushed forward and threw her arms round his neck.

"Jack! oh, Jack!" she cried.

He stared down at her, and he laughed; it was a horrid little laugh. Then he started, and the light of

intelligence beamed in his eyes. Quite softly he said, "Cheeky?"

"Yes, yes, Jack; it's me!"

"Oh, Cheeky, where am I? What have I been doing?" He looked around at the sea of faces and then at his bloodstained arms. "Oh, yes, I remember"—his voice faltered—"Cheeky, they told me that my wife, Violet, has been false—Searight, the man I—and it's true! I know it's true!"

"Poor Jack! poor Jack!" Her trembling voice could say no more. She patted the bare shoulders caressingly. The I.D.B. still lay at their feet senseless, and the crowd looked on as if it were a dream.

Senior pressed her to him. Suddenly deep sobs shook his frame, and tears coursed down his cheeks. The girl had saved him from murder and madness.

Then gently freeing herself from his embrace, she beckoned to one of the miners, who was engaged with Mr. Stewart, signing him to fetch from the corner Senior's ulster. She put it on him; and pained, feeling it sacrilege that other eyes should witness his grief, she led him like a child away, as the people in silence drew back.

Hand in hand they went forth into the wide expanse of veldt that, like a sea, stretched outward, meeting the heavens in shimmering haze. Now, blending with her sorrow for the sufferer, even bringing with it a dim sense of shame, came irresistible thankfulness for the sore need he was in of her: it was ecstasy to be there to comfort, to sustain! Tenderly she murmured words of compassion; her voice sounded like a sweet lullaby in his ears, and a soothing restfulness stole over him, a peace to soul and mind.

"Oh, Cheeky!" he faintly said, "you are so good—so good! Then plaintively, "You—if *you* had only——"

"Hush, Jack! oh, please don't!" and the tone had changed to one of anguish.

But, amidst what seemed dire affliction, great was the blessing that had fallen. Though the news had been kept from him, his faithless wife was dead. And in the heart of this little reformed waif was an emotion to which all else was now subservient—it was her love for Jack.

THE END.





